

BHAGAVAN and NAYANA



"He sat then and there
at the feet of the Sage..."

S.Shankaranarayanan

BHAGAVAN AND NAYANA

S. SANKARANARAYANAN



1997

V. S. RAMANAN
President, Board of Trustees,
SRI RAMANASRAMAM
TIRUVANNAMALAI-606 603
SOUTH INDIA

© Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai

First Edition 1983
Second Edition 1997
2000 Copies

Typesetting and Printed at All India Press
Kennedy Nagar, Pondicherry-605 001, India.

FOREWORD

Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri, famed as *Vasistha Ganapati Muni*, was a mighty spiritual personality in his own right and had a large following of illustrious disciples. It is a standing testimony to his spiritual sincerity and intellectual honesty that he recognised the uniqueness of Bhagavan's teaching, accepted him as his Guru and proclaimed him as the *Maharshi* to the whole world. Those who want to understand the message of the Maharshi in its pristine purity, have to study the Muni's rendition of the Master's teachings like *Sat Darshanam* and *Sri Ramana Gita*.

Sri Bhagavan used to refer to the Muni as *Nāyanā*, just as his disciples used to call him endearingly. Fortunately still amongst us are a few who had known Nayana and Bhagavan and their mutual esteem and who had been the recipients of their Grace.

As a Centenary Tribute to the sacred memory of Nayana, *The Mountain Path* published in 1978 in its issues, four articles by Sri S. Sankaranarayanan, bringing out the mutual association between Bhagavan and Nayana. These articles provided a lot of interest in the Personality and Teachings of the Maharshi and the Muni and there have been persistent demands from earnest aspirants for a fuller treatment of the whole subject by the same author.

Sri Sankaranarayanan, being a disciple of Sri Kapali Sastriar and a recipient of Bhagavan's Grace, readily agreed and the outcome is the present book *Bhagavan and Nayana*.

The four articles that appeared in *The Mountain Path* are

reproduced in Part I of the book. All the other articles except “A *Sloka* For Invoking The Presence” which had already appeared in *The Mountain Path*, have been written specially for this publication. Part II deals with Nayana’s writings on the Maharshi—*Upadesa Saram*, *Sat Darshanam* and *Sri Ramana Gīta* dealing with the Teaching and the Vision, the *Sloka* of Invocation as an aid to the actual practice, *Sādhana*. Drawing much of his material from *Sri Vāsishtha Vaibhavam*, an authentic biography in Sanskrit of Nayana and *Umāsahasram* commentary in Sanskrit, both by his illustrious disciple, Sri Kapali Sastriar, the author in Part III deals with the Muni’s life-sketch, his compositions extempore, his magnum opus *Umāsahasram*, his style and his works. Also, a rare Sanskrit commentary of the Muni on the intricate *Isopanishad* in the light of the Maharshi’s teaching is published for the first time with an English translation of the author.

This publication is dedicated to His Living Presence.

Sri Ramanasramam,
26, December 1996
(Jayanthi Day)

V. S. RAMANAN
President, Board of Trustees

Contents

PART I

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Initiation | 1 |
| Realization | 8 |
| Fulfilment | 17 |
| Propagation | 27 |

PART II

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Upadesa Saram .. | 41 |
| Sat-Darshanam .. | 59 |
| Sri Ramana Gita .. | 65 |
| Vision of Vasishtha Muni .. | 70 |
| A Sloka For Invoking The Presence | 80 |

PART III

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni: | |
| A Life Sketch | 87 |
| Compositions Extempore | 106 |
| Uma Sahasram | 120 |
| Isopanishad Bhashyam .. | 127 |
| Kavyakantha's Style | 145 |
| Kavyakantha's Works | 152 |

PART I



BHAGAVAN SHRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

INITIATION

Two O'Clock in the afternoon. It was like any other day in Tiruvannamalai. An ardent aspiring soul, full of faith and fervour, Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri famed as Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, felt on that day, wretched. After years of *sādhana* he had come to the end of his tether. Every thing appeared bleak; frustration and futility seemed to stare him in the face. Renowned as a versatile genius, a scholar and poet of no mean order, there was no area in the vast field of Sanskrit language and literature he had not traversed, no nook or corner of the ancient lore of the land which had escaped the searchlight of his scrutiny. He had delved deep into the mysteries of the *Vedas*, quaffed at the fountain springs of the *Upanishads*, mastered the spiritual and ritual sides of the *Tantra*. At his hands, the *Shāstra* had regained its original meaning of science, religion and ritual had revealed their rationale, tradition and practice bared their foundation of Truth.

But he was not satisfied. His quest was for the knowledge supreme, "knowing which all this becomes known". How many *mantras* he had taken for *japa* and performed the rite successfully! How many spiritual practices he had pursued, how many disciplines and austerities he had subjected himself to! Only in the course of his austerities he had come to Arunachala. Still he had no sign of any revelation, no indication of Divine manifestation. Was there something wrong with his seeking, some mistake in the method, some error in his erudition, some shortcoming or deficiency in his *sādhana*? Or, were all our ancient lore and learning, tradition and knowledge, a bundle of superstition, a pack of lies?

Suddenly he remembered that a Sadhu, one Brahmanaswami, was living on the hill Arunachala observing silence and solitude, who might perhaps help.

Two or three years before, on two occasions, Sri Vasishtha Muni had met the Sadhu. Seeking a suitable place for his austerities, in the course of his wanderings the Muni had come to Arunachala. On one occasion, along with one Viswanatha Iyer he had gone to the Virupaksha cave on the hill to have *darshan* of the Sadhu. Finding the Sadhu not there, both of them repaired to the Ashrama of Padmanabha Swami. There the Muni saw Brahmanaswami. That was the first time when they met each other. The Muni was impressed by the splendour and Silence that hovered around the Sadhu. Finding him different from the common run of people, the Muni bowed. The Sadhu rested his gracious gaze on him. Meanwhile Padmanabha Swami entreated the Muni to explain the famous verse *shuklambaradharam vishnum*.¹

The Muni obliged and proceeded to explain the verse, explaining the words in such a way that they applied to the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Ganapati, "Here is a great Sadhu. I can explain the verse in relation to him also", so saying,

-
1. शुक्लाम्बरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्व विघ्नोपशान्तये ॥

This is the verse with which one begins any ritual or worship. Recital of the verse at the beginning of any act, it is said, ensures removal of all obstacles.

1. This interpretation is original, testimony to the Muni's intellectual acumen. The normal interpretation of *caturbhuj* is one who has four arms.

Vasishtha Muni began again: "Brahmanaswami wears only a white loin cloth, so he is *shuklāmaradhara*, he is in consciousness vast, all-prevading *vishnu*, his complexion is pleasing like the glow of the moon *sashivarna* and he is *chaturbhuk*¹—as he has eaten up the four, mind, *chitta* the memory stuff, intellect and ego—and remains as the Self all the time."

Brahmanaswami said nothing but smiled approvingly.

In the same year when his wife and five year old son, Mahadeva, came to join him in Tiruvannamalai, Ganapati Muni went along with them to have *darshan* of Brahmanaswami once again.

On both the occasions, the Muni was impressed and felt drawn towards Brahmanaswami. Absolute faith and devotion had not yet made their appearance in his approach. Still it was repugnant to his innate nobility to dismiss Brahmanaswami—as some highbrows did in those days—as a hybrid who was neither a member of the orthodox Brahminfold nor a regular *sannyāsin*.

Now, however, in this hour of despondency, Vasishtha Muni thought of Brahmanaswami. For years, steeped in silence, the Swami had been enraptured in bliss ineffable. Surely he could guide. Immediately Kavyakantha set off and began to climb the hill. There he espied Brahmanaswami seated in front of the cave. Those were days of the famous *kṛttikā* festival in Tiruvannamalai. Everywhere there were crowds of people. Near the cave also people might have thronged to have *darshan* of Brahmanaswami. Fortunately on that day there was no one there. The Swami was all alone. Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni looked at him to his heart's content and fell at his feet, holding the Swami's right foot with his right hand and the left foot with his left hand. When he got up, he found himself supplicating to the Swami:

"I have read all the *shāstras*, performed *japa* of the famous *mantras*, observed hundreds of penances and austerities. Yet I have had no realisation. Is my *tapas* tainted, is there any shortcoming or perhaps I do not know the method. I am said to be a learned man, yet I do not know. I take refuge in thee. Help me out!"

The Swami immediately recognised him as the great scholar Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri. He also remembered Sri Sastri explaining the verse *shuklāmbāradharam vishnum*, applying the words to him. He mentioned this himself in later years in the course of conversation. Brahmanaswami kept quiet for quite some time, gazing at him. In those days he rarely broke his silence. But slowly these words in Tamil emerged from the mouth of the Sage:

"Find out wherefrom this 'I' springs forth and merge at its source; that is *tapas*. Find out wherefrom the sound of the *mantra* in *japa* rises up and merge there; that is *tapas*."

The great Vasishtha Muni was thrilled. Waves and waves of bliss rose up and soaked his frame. He sat then and there at the feet of the Sage and meditated till evening. He was completely satisfied. He was convinced that no ordinary person could have imparted to him such a message. He made enquiries about the name of the Swami from the attendant. Finding it was *venkatarāman*, he made it brief and beautiful as RAMANA and acclaimed the Brahmanaswami as MAHARSHI, the great Seer.

Next day Vasishtha Ganapati Muni wrote to his intimate disciples:

"I have found my Master, my Guru. He is the Sage of Arunachala known as Brahmanaswami. He is no

ordinary Swami. He is a great Seer, a mighty spiritual personality. To me and to you all he is BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI. Let the whole world know him as such."

Thus the fine flower had its fragrance spread far and wide. Ever since, drawn by its soul-filling aroma, men, women and children from all walks of life and from all over the world have been flocking to Arunachala. Indeed a new chapter was begun in the spiritual history of India on 18-11-1907 when this momentous meeting took place between the Muni and the Maharshi.

On the same day Kavyakantha wrote five verses in Sanskrit in praise of the Maharshi and gave them to the attendant, Palaniswami. Unfortunately they were lost. Since the end of the day, in front of the Maharshi, the Muni asked Palaniswami whether there was any suitable place in the vicinity for doing *tapas*. Hearing this, Sri Maharshi himself favoured the Muni with the reply that there was the Mango-tree cave nearby. The attendant immediately handed over to the Muni the key of the place.

Vasishtha Ganapati Muni repaired to the Mango-tree cave and here the famous *umāsahasram*, the *magnum qous* of the Seer poet was composed.

Ganapati Muni felt that it was by the grace of the Divine Mother that he had obtained this Perfect Guru. In gratitude, he wanted to compose a poem of a thousand verses in praise of *umā*, the Divine Mother and began it with the approval of the Sage. The Muni set for himself certain regulations. The poem had to be completed within twenty days as a part of *tapas* in the Mango-tree cave. Light food at noon and milk at night was the regimen. The Maharshi went time and again to the cave and kept company. The presence of the Maharshi helped the Muni to naturalise his abnormal condition, for ever-since his

momentous meeting with the Maharshi he was constantly subject to cascading spiritual experiences and floods of super-human delight. During this time, the grand old lady Echchamma brought him food. One of those days it so happened that at an unusual hour the Muni experienced pangs of hunger. At the same time, a girl appeared before Echchamma who was in the town and appraised her of the Muni's plight and vanished. Surprised, Echchamma promptly prepared food and sent it up the hill to the Muni through a boy and asked him to find out what the matter was. The Muni ate heartily and sent word that hunger was the matter.

Day by day the composition of verses went on. But an impediment occurred. A boil appeared on the righthand finger of the Muni, near the nail and the pain became unbearable. Then a miracle happened. A doctor, one Punyakoti from Madras, appeared on the scene with all his equipment and a minor surgical operation put the matter right. The previous night, the doctor had a dream in which he was directed to go and give medical help to the Muni on the hill of Arunachala. He came from Madras, saw the Maharshi, knew from him the whereabouts of the Muni and then went straight to the cave.

Because of this setback, on the twentieth day, more than two hundred verses still remained to be composed. The verses had to be composed within that night, somehow. The Maharshi went and remained there. Vasudeva Sastri, Narayana Ghana-pāthi and three other amanuenses took down the verses composed and dictated then and there. In the presence of the Maharshi, starting in the second quarter of the night, Vasishtha Muni completed them by midnight. His inspiration was at its zenith and the verses flowed freely. All the while, the Maharshi was sitting there with eyes closed. On completion of the work he opened his eyes and enquired, "Whatever I said, has it been taken down?" This question took all by surprise.

“Endearing to his devotees, Bhagavan Maharshi has just come out of his deep natural state; he is not aware of any distinction between the inner world and the outer and so asks this question. It is by his special grace that the work has been completed before midnight”. Realizing this, the Muni said to the Maharshi, “Yes, receiving all that has been granted by thy Grace, I have just completed the work.”

That is why at the end of the first recension of the great work *umāsahasram*, the Poet wrote: “I was able to accomplish this great work on time only because of the Grace of my Guru, the great Soul, Ramana.”

Thus it was Vasishtha Ganapati Muni who made known to the world of scholars the Sage of the age and proclaimed him to the general public as BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI and spread his influence and message.

REALIZATION

Some days after the composition of *umāsahasram*, Sri Maharshi and the devotees along with Ganapati Muni repaired to the Pachaiaimman¹ Temple which is situated in the north-east corner at the foot of the hill, Arunachala. There they all stayed for three months.

When after a stay of three years at Vellore, Ganapati Muni came to Tiruvannamalai, he was shown this temple, as a good place for practising his austerities. In the course of his penance at the temple, one night the Muni had a vivid dream which seemed to be more real than the waking state. He saw a terrible battalion of goblins, *bhūtās* closing upon him. They all danced and danced, the very earth quaking at their pounding feet. The Muni woke up and spontaneously praised the Goddess with this verse.²

“The one who rides on the stately bull
Holds her dearer than his life.

-
1. The Mother Goddess known as *shyāmalā mātangi* one of the Ten Cosmic Powers, *dasa mahāvidyās* of the *shākta tantra* which describes her complexion as emerald green.
 2. This verse is now included in *umāsahasram*:

उक्षराजवाहनस्य जीवीताद् गरीयसी
पक्षिराजवाहनादि वर्ण्यमान वैभवा ।
केकि लोक चक्रवर्ति वाहनेन पुत्रिणी
वारणारि सार्वभौम वाहना गतिर्म्म ॥

The one who mounts on the sovereign bird (Garuda)
 Sings her praise along with others.
 The one borne by the peacock grand
 Is her son worthy of her.
 She indeed is my stay and succour
 She, mounted on the lordly lion."

Suddenly the Muni found a transformation taking place in him. All along he was an ardent devotee of Shiva. But from thence an intense devotion and yearning towards the Mother Divine seized his heart and began to pervade his whole being.

Now he had the good fortune to stay in the same Pacchaimman Temple in the cherished company of his newly-found Master. For a long time, even before coming to Arunachala, the Muni was engaged in doing *tapas*. He had already completed the *japa* of many *mantras* and performed the concerned rites. The results of all those past practices began to reveal themselves, now that he was in the company of the Maharshi. Many things which could be called supernatural happened naturally to him.

He got ready a fair copy of *umāsahasram* and one day and read the whole composition before the image of the Goddess in the Temple, in the presence of Sri Maharshi and other devotees. Many good omens were witnessed by all those present. As the reading was going on, flowers fell down from the image as if in approval. At night Narayana Ghanapāthi had a dream. He saw the Goddess alighting from an airborne *vimāna*, a picture of white radiance and asking him to read some verses from *umāsahasram*. When the Ghanapāthi began to read a verse the Mother said:

"No, not that one. Please read the verse *ganapataye*

*stanaghatayoh.*¹ It is so simple and sweet; it is worth a crore”.

At that time there were many unexpected visitors who came to see the Maharshi. Some of them remained to stay and take food with the devotees, Gambheeram Seshayya making the arrangements for feeding them. Vasishtha Muni predicted the arrival of those visitors and details about them though he had no prior knowledge. He foretold the arrival of Kalambur Venkataraman who wanted to take part in the struggle for political emancipation of the country and sought the requisite power for it through *mantra japa*.

The Muni told the Maharshi and others quite some days before, that one Chirupakkam Kondayyah would be coming to see him though he did not know him from Adam. When Chirupakkam Kondayyah actually came, the Muni simply asked him whether he was a worshipper of God Ganapati, though the Muni had not a clue. Kondayyah answered in the affirmative. The Muni asked him whether his father was one Vedachalayya. Kondayyah said yes and narrated the following:

Every day he used to do the *japa* of the God Ganapati regularly and do the corresponding oblations in the sacred Fire. The day before when he was offering the oblations as usual in the fire, he saw a human form emerge from the flames

-
1. गणपतये स्तनघटयोः
पदकमले सप्तलोक भक्तेभ्यः ।
अधरपुटे त्रिपुरजिते
दधासि पीयूषमम्ब त्वम् ॥

“Mother, thou bearest the nectar—for Ganapati in the shapely breasts. In thy lotus feet, for the devotees in the seven worlds. And in thy cupped lips for the Vanquisher of the three cities”

—umāsahasram

and stand out clearly in front of him. He had come in search of that Form and had now realised that the Form was none other than that of Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni.

Before the Muni was born, his father had a unique experience. He had gone to Banaras and when he was in temple praying in the presence of the Deity Ganapati, he had the vision of a little child emanating from the deity and entering into him. Soon afterwards, when a second son was born to him, the father appropriately named him Ganapati, convinced that the child was an emanation of God Ganapati himself. When the child Ganapati grew into a man, he witnessed in himself a growing aspiration to go out and perform *tapas* like the Rishis of yore. He was at that time about twenty years old. One day when he closed his eyes in contemplation, he had a vision. A white man stood before him and said in Tamil: "I am related to you from the past, your longstanding companion in the performance of *tapas*. Go out and perform *tapas*. I am Bhadraka and you are Ganaka". Later on, when Ganapati Sastri was living in Banaras he met one Suryanarayana Yogi who shared this secret with him. He said. "You are by name Ganaka. I am Suketu, your friend in austerities. We are sixteen in number and have taken birth for the welfare of the world". He also gave out the names of two, as Daivarata and Sthulasiras.

The white man Bhadraka came in the Muni's dreams quite often and they found happiness in each other's company in that plane. The bond between them grew. When Vasishtha Muni was in Vellore, one night Bhadraka appeared in his dream and said. 'My present journey has come to an end. Be attentive. Hereafter my companionship with you in *tapas* will be intense'. The Muni woke up, felt very sad and related the dream to one of his disciples, A. R. Duraiswamy. The morning papers carried the news that on the previous night the President

of the Theosophical Society, Col. Olcott had passed away.¹ Out of curiosity, the Muni asked to see the photograph of the departed one and found he was none other than Bhadraka, his constant companion in spiritual quests, his intimate friend during dreams.

Earlier in his life, when Ganapati Muni was doing *tapas* in Bhuvaneshwar, an old lady of seventy had a dream about him. Her husband Lambodara Das had died long ago, and she had ceased to think of him. Yet in the dream of the old lady, the husband appeared as he used to be when alive, changed his form to that of God Ganapati and again became his original form and then told her that she could find him now in the rear of the Vasudeva temple. The venerable lady sent her son to the temple thinking that she was going to get an idol of Ganesha, only to find the Muni engaged in *tapas* at the indicated place.

All such incidents and intimations from within and without assured the Muni that he had a divine element in him. To facilitate that divine element to manifest, he had to do *tapas*. The declaration of Cherupakkam Kondayyah made the Muni again realise that he had in him an aspect, *amsa* of the light that is God Ganapati. His great devotion first to Shiva and then to the Divine Mother assumed significance. But then who was the Maharshi? When the Muni first saw him at Padmanabha Swami's place, it struck him that he might be the Sthulasiras about whom Suryanarayana Yogi had spoken. Anyhow Vasishtha Muni had not long to wait.

Perhaps it was the intention of the Divine Mother that the identity of her two sons should be established beyond ambiguity when they stayed in the Pacchiaiamman temple. One early morning they were all sitting in front of the Maharshi

1. February 1907.

who was as usual indrawn, steeped in the silent Self. Vasishtha Muni saw a sparkling light come down and touch the forehead of the Maharshi six times. Immediately the Muni had the realization that Sri Maharshi was none other than an incarnation of Lord Subrahmanya, the light and energy of the Lord that became six-fold. He is indeed Guha residing in the *hṛdaya guha*, the heart-cavern of all beings. He is the eternally young teacher *sanatkumāra* who shows one the shore beyond darkness. The Seer-Poet Ganapati Muni gave expression to his realisation through the famous eight verses beginning with *yānāyātra na kekinām kulapatih*¹ revealing the Maharshi's identity to the whole world. All the discerning devotees realised that the Muni and the Maharshi were the emanations of Ganapati and Skanda, the sons of God who had appeared on earth to restore back the children of Man to their Eternal Father.

The two Sons of God who came down from the Celestial regions for the same purpose—how different they looked in outward activity! The Maharshi was silent, indrawn most of the time, a waveless ocean of deep bliss. The Muni, on the other hand, was all expression sparkling with an ethereal splendour, a diamond reflecting the myriad colours that fuse into the white Radiance. The Maharshi would stay still, but the Muni had to wander from place to place.

When Vasishtha Muni wanted to go to Tiruvottiyur near Madras in the course of his *tapas*, he prayed for a message from the Maharshi who favoured him with these words:

“Place your burden at the feet of the Lord of the universe

1. These are now included in *ramana chatvārimsat*, the Forty verses in praise of Sri Ramana.

Vide Part II: Vision of Vasishtha Muni.

who is ever victorious and accomplishes everything. Remain all the time steadfast in the heart, in the Transcendental Absolute. God knows the past, present and future. He will determine the future for you and accomplish the work. What is to be done will be done at the proper time. Don't worry. Abide in the heart and surrender your acts to the Divine".

Accompanied by one of his disciples, Vasudeva Sastri, the Muni went to Tiruvottiyur. There Venkataraman, Narayana Ghanapathi and others joined him. On the first night, at the temple dedicated to the Goddess Tripurasundari, in the presence of the Deity, the Muni for the first time met Sri Kapali Sastriar who was destined to become one of his illustrious disciples.

For performing *tapas*, the Muni first stayed in the Veda Pathasala and later in the Ganesha temple situated in the South Mada Street. There he met great scholars like Panchapagesa Sastri and cleared their doubts in the course of conversation even before their giving expression to them.

When the Muni was doing *tapas* in the Ganesha temple, on the eighteenth day a strange thing happened. The Muni was wide awake, sitting and meditating. He suddenly saw the Maharshi there. Surprised he got up hurriedly with devotion welling up in his heart, but Sri Bhagavan put his hand on the Muni's head and made him sit down. The Muni was thrilled. A great Force cascaded through his frame. Billows of sheer joy rose from his heart and overflowed. At the same time what happened to the Maharshi in Arunachala, the Maharshi himself narrated later on in the course of conversation.

At that time, the Maharshi was as usual sitting in the Virupaksha cave on the hill of Arunachala. He experienced that from his heart a ray of light rose and darted through his head outside. Along with it the Maharshi went up the sky and was travelling on the path of the luminaries. He heard from

some-where the word Tiruvottiyur and came down. He walked up the road in front of him, saw the Ganesha temple and entered it.

Such was the relationship between the Muni and the Maharshi. The Muni realised that he was a manifestation of God Ganapati who was traditionally senior to God Skanda. But how the Muni held the Maharshi is revealed in the following extract from a letter dated April 21, 1931 written by the Muni to the Maharshi from Gokarna (N. Kanara Dist).

“Salutations to thee, my Lord the Junior. Thou livest in the *guha* cave and art Guha thyself. Thou slumbereth in the bodies of worldly and manifesteth in the bodies of Yogins. This inner manifestation is spoken of as the second birth of men.”

The seers of the Mantras praise thee as Vaisvanara, the philosophers as Virat. Thy form is Awareness, thy body is Awareness, thy place is Awareness and thy weapon is Awareness.”

Thine own
The Prince Elder¹.

In another letter written from Anandashrama, Sirsi, on March 24, 1931, the Muni implores the Maharshi:

“I know that a momentary thought emanating from thee is capable of bringing about in me a realisation wherein I shall see everything as the Self. I also know that no thought steps into thy mind out of thine own volition. Only God can raise a thought in thy mind. Somebody may ask: What is all this round-about way, touching the nose by bringing the hand behind the head instead of directly in front? Why not God himself favour me with the realisation? Why should he take pains to create a thought in somebody else’s mind? True, but

1. *jyeshtharāja* one of the names of God Ganapati.

only the fortunate know this secret: The rule is that when the *avatāra* is on earth, God will act only through him and not by Himself.

O Lord, therefore I pray to God that he may create in thy mind such a merciful thought.

Your Brother, in different births.”

What more testimony do we want to proclaim the Maharshi as the Sage of the age, as the descent of the Divine to uplift the whole earth towards Godhead?

FULFILMENT

From Tiruvottiyur Vasishtha Muni went along with his disciples in the course of his *tapas* to *Padaiveedu*, sacred to the Goddess Renuka, the mother of Parasurama. There he engaged himself in *tapas*, following the instructions of the Maharshi and had certain remarkable experiences. He travelled far south upto Kanya Kumari visiting all the holy places on the way. Then he repaired to the West and stayed for long in Gokarna at the loving insistence of his disciple Daivarata. The Muni was ever on the move. Between Andhra and Orissa, there was at that time the native State of Mandasa. Ganapati Muni stayed in *tapas* for a long time in the State of Mandasa and the adjoining hill of Mahendra. Intermittently he was visiting Arunachala and meeting the Maharshi.

Thus years passed and at one time the disciples in the South actually lost track of the movements of the Muni. News came to them finally that their Nayana had repaired to his village where he had been long bed-ridden with some severe illness and that he had just recovered. His illustrious disciple Sri Kapali Sastriar was able to locate him at the house of Subrahmanya Sastri in Secunderabad.

When Sastriar went from Tiruvottiyur to Secunderabad and saw the Muni, it was a touching meeting between the Master and the disciple. Meeting after such a long time, the two spent the whole night talking. In the middle of the night, as the Muni was narrating what had happened, he suddenly sat up in his bed and exclaimed; "I feel as though I have emerged out of an eclipse. Now I shall go back to Arunachala and

resume my *tapas* at the feet of my Master, the Maharshi". He continued, with an extempore verse addressing God Ganapati, the guiding spirit of his corporeal existence:

"If I do not perform austere *tapas*, it is thy mistake. Why hast thou not impelled me to do so, O Son of Siva? If thou hast impelled me alright but I have not followed, what is the power of thy impulsion, O Elephant-faced God?"¹

Vasishtha Muni had to engage himself in *tapas* all the time. Rest and respite was not for him. He could not help wandering from place to place in his spiritual quest. But the Muni understood that the Maharshi alone could grant the fruit of all his *tapas*. He knew that he could find fulfilment only at the feet of the Maharshi. Very much later, writing from Sirsi, in a letter dated 14, April 1931 (Tamil New Year Day) to the Maharshi, Vasishtha Muni has given open expression to his conviction:

"Lord, who lies in the heart-cavern, please accept our salutations at this beginning of the year. Make us grow with thy Blessings. By thy grace may this year give us all-round weal and victory. Master, I feel that all is accomplished when the austerities get matured, the ego is cast aside, the natural inborn state, *sahaja sthiti*, becomes permanent and all the net work of actions depends on thee. Steeped in the knowledge-self (*vijnānātma*) may I see the way to inherence in my original Self. I know that the accomplishment of all my

1. This verse is now included in *herambopasthānam* a poetic composition of Vasishtha Muni in praise of God Ganapati.

1. घोरं करोमि न तपोयदितेऽपराधः
किं प्रेरणं न कृतवानसि रुदसुनो ।
संप्रेरितश्च भवन्तायदि नाचरेयं
संप्रेरणस्य तवक्त्रं गजवक्त्रं शक्तिः ॥

desires and my integral fulfilment can only be at thy Feet. I look forward to that auspicious time. Though I am now far away from thee, may I be held very close to thy heart.

“Lord, thou reposest in my heart. I repose at thy feet. Thou art my all-powerfull master. I am thy servant, carrying out thy work.

Thine, on all counts.
vāsishtha”.

Without losing much time, Vasishtha Muni started from Secunderabad and, accompanied by his wife, proceeded to Tiruvannamalai. On the way he spent some time in Tiruvottiyur and stayed for a month in Madras. All the disciples noticed a new power in the Muni. His very presence gave them remarkable spiritual experiences. They felt as though the doors of the hidden knowledge were opened out for them. Along with the Muni, they also experienced a flood of bliss inundating their entire system. The Muni confided with them that the latent hidden energy usually dormant in all beings, the Kundalini Sakti had become active in him. Consequently all the yogic knowledge was laid bare before him. His body became light and full of light. The Muni was frank when he said that he had not pursued the path of Pranayama or other yogic practices to merit these experiences. It was undoubtedly the result of the grace of his guru and God.

On reaching Arunachala, the Muni got the blessings of the Maharshi and with his consent repaired to the Mangotree cave for *tapas*. It was the same place where thirteen years earlier the immortal poem *umāsahasram* was born. The moment the Muni set his foot in the cave, the experiences which he had been having in Tiruvottiyur and in Madras became intensified. A flood of energy coursed through the body all the time. Two or three disciples who were by his side were struck by

the supernatural effulgence of his person. The Muni was in deep *tapas* throughout. He did not see the difference between night and day; neither did he see the distinction between his inner state and the outside world. Vasishttha Muni went from the cave once every day to Skandashrama to pay his respects to the Master. Once, unable to go to Skandashrama he sent a letter to the Maharshi describing the state he was in. He felt as though his head was being pierced and a stream of bliss shot forth from there making him completely intoxicated. His body was not in his control.

Somehow the next day, with great difficulty, the Muni proceeded to Skandashrama and narrated the whole thing to the Maharshi. The Maharshi, full of compassion, heard everything with rapt attention, affectionately passed his hand over the head of the Muni and told him not to worry. The Maharshi advised the Muni to anoint the crown of his head with castor oil before bath and apply almond oil after bath.

That night Ganapati Muni suffered terribly. There was an unbearable burning sensation throughout his body. It was just like some poison quickly spreading through the whole system. The Muni was not able to place the head on the ground. He could not lie down on his side either. It looked as though his head would break into pieces any time. He suffered unbearable pain.

Suddenly a sound was heard; something like smoke was seen. The *kundalini* had caused an aperture at the top of his skull. The Muni's wife and daughter who were not very far from him saw the whole thing. The devotee Kondayyah held the body of the Muni from falling. Fortunately a detailed authentic version of what exactly happened has been made available to posterity by K. R. Krishnaswami (Kalambur Kittaji) who was at that time serving the Muni.

After that experience, for ten days something like smoke or vapour was found emanating from the orifice at the top of the skull. By that time the burning sensation subsided. The play of force became bearable. The long story of suffering, pain and agony ended. The body was filled with the flow of cool nectar of bliss. The face of the Muni reflected an ethereal splendour. His eyes bore the effulgence of the supernatural. After this extraordinary experience of *kapālabheda*, the Muni lived for fourteen years. Throughout the period people who came into contact with him noticed this: just like breath coming in and going out, something like water vapour descended from the sky entered the head of the Muni, through the orifice in the skull and then came out through the same orifice.

As a part *tapas*, Ganapati Muni began to revise his grand poem, *umāsahasram*. He incorporated in the poem many new verses in the light of his own experiences.

Here are some of them:

“Siva in the form of *taijasa linga* (Arunachala) had retained in his throat the unbearable fire of poison. And who will become a corpse here having drunk the sweet nectar born of thy force. O Goddess?”

(*umāsahasram* 5.1.16)¹

“Mother, for thy play of ascent and descent, the frame

-
1. कण्ठ निरुद्धे भूरिविषाग्नौ,
तैजसलिङ्गवासिहरेण ।
त्वदबलजातं स्वाद्रूढं क्रो
देविनिपीय प्रेत इह स्यात् ॥

work of the spinal column extending from the top of the head to the base centre *mūlādhāra* is the ground”.

(*umāsahasram* 1.4.6)¹

If one gets in tune with the force that descends from above through the aperture in the skull, one needs to do no other yoga”.

(*umāsahasram* 1.4.8)²

Naturally it took all by surprise that a person when alive should have experience of his skull being broken. Vasishtha Muni explained the phenomenon to his intimate disciples and cited the authority of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* which talks of the breaking of the skull *vyapohya sīrsha kapāle*. In a yogi when the *kundalini sakti* wakes up, it passes upwards through the *sushumnā* channel, breaks the skull and gets attuned with the Cosmic Energy. This was exactly what happened to Vasishtha Ganapati Muni.

After the breaking of the skull, *kapālabheda*, the Muni could not bear the touch of the razor on his head. Similarly he

-
1. यात्नयातविहारे
मातस्तस्मिन्भवत्युपाधिस्ते ।
आरभ्य मस्तकस्थलं
आमूलाधार मस्थि पञ्जरिका ॥
 2. नभसः शीर्षं द्वारा
प्रवहन्ती यद्गृहं विग्रहे शक्तिम् ।
अनुसन्दधाति नित्यं
कृतिनस्तस्येतरेरलंयोगे ॥

could not walk bare-footed. From thence he never shaved his head and wore sandals to protect his feet.

The Muni read the revised *umāsahasram* in the Arunachaleswara Temple before the Goddess *apeetakuchāmbā*. And then he began a composition of seven hundred verses called *indrānī saptasati*, paying his tribute to the *sakti* of the all powerful God Indra, who is high above all the universe, *visvasmāt uttarah*. It was then summer and the sky was cloudless, bright with sunlight. Even so, at the time of composition of the seven hundred verses, every evening there appeared in the sky flashes of lightning, indications of the unfailing presence of Indra's *sakti*, the great *vajra vairochani*. To the seer-poet, steeped in *tapas* these lightning flashes were intimations of reassurance from the Supreme Goddess herself. After completing the composition, the Muni went accompanied by his wife and disciples to Padaiveedu to dedicate the work to the presiding Deity Renuka. When the composition was read by the seer poet all those present felt that the presence of the Goddess was so palpable; it looked as though the Goddess in the idol came to life and heard it with approval.

Thus Vasishtha Muni got his fulfilment. The individual consciousness in him became universalised through the opening effected by the breaking of the skull. The portion *amsa* of God Ganapati held in his corporeal frame pervaded everywhere. The Maharshi's grace manifested to the world through the Muni.

When the composition of *indrānī saptasati* was going on in the Mango-tree cave, in Skandashrama, the mother of Bhagavan Maharshi shed her human body. The Maharshi was a *svatah siddha*—a spontaneously self-realised soul from the beginning and he had to make no effort for any liberation. To live on normally, a man among men in the world, after liberation, *jivan mukti*, was the meaning and message of his life. He

wanted to impart liberation even to a person unprepared for such a liberation. The Maharshi tried to liberate the soul of his attendant Palaniswami before he passed away. But Palaniswami could not co-operate in the endeavour. But in the case of his mother, the Maharshi had a sense of fulfilment. With his active assistance, the soul of his mother found its liberation. The individual consciousness became universalised.

When the question of the disposal of the body of the departed one came up, it was Vasishtha Muni who decided the issue. He cited verses from *Sri Ramana Gīta*, to show that women had an equal right to *sannyāsa* as men. Even in the case of an ordinary ochre-robed *sannyāsi*, people bury the dead body and do not cremate it. Here the mother of the Maharshi had the good fortune of being actively assisted in her last journey by the Maharshi himself and she shed her mortal frame as a perfectly liberated being. Therefore it would be improper to cremate her, argued Vasishtha Muni, and saw to it that a Samadhi was erected over her mortal remains. At the foot of the hill, in the south east corner, a spot was chosen for the Samadhi. It was scorching summer and there was absolutely no sign of water in the vicinity. But when the Maharshi pointed out a place and the people dug, lo! water gushed forth in stream and that became the sacred *tirtha* for the Samadhi. To commemorate the event, the foremost disciple of the Maharshi, the great Vasishtha Ganapati Muni sang a few verses¹ saying:

“It was the year *dundubhi*, the sixth day of the month

1. सौन्दर्याम्बानिर्वाण षट्कम् ।

i. दुन्दुभिवर्षे वृषषष्ठदिने माधव कृष्णदलीयनवन्म्याम् ।

भार्गववासरनिशि शततारासंयुक्तायां प्रथमेयामे ॥

ii. भारद्वाजी पाराशर्य श्रेष्ठ कुलोदभ सुन्दर पत्नी ।

गुरुगृह भागज रमण महर्षर्मात्तापुताचारित्रेण ॥

Taurus, the ninth day of the dark fortnight in the spring and a Friday. In the first quarter of that night when the sky was spangled with a hundred stars, Saundaryamba became the Effulgence ! Hailing from the clan of Bharadwaja, she was wedded to Sundara, who was born in the family of Parasaras. Spotless in character, she was the mother of Ramana Maharshi, as *amsa* of the God Guru Guha. Washing her sins by her devotion to the feet of Siva, abandoning her mental attachments, her Prana controlled by the force in the hand of Guha (Ramana), she cast away all distractions at that very moment and became liberated.

"Saundaryamba became the Effulgence, proclaimed by the Vedas and Upanishads, the Effulgence that has pervaded all the worlds, the Effulgence that manifested through the gaze of the son, Guha (Ramana).

"Here is the new Tirtha, remover of all blemish, at the Samadhi of Mother Saundaryamba, like the stream of pollen from the two lotus hands of Ramana Maharshi.

"May the holy mother of the Maharshi shine forth ! May her Samadhi shine forth ! May the Lingam installed on it by the Maharshi shine forth ! May the new Tirtha shine forth as the remover of all imperfection !"

About six months after, in December 1922, the Maharshi came and settled down at his Mother's Samadhi and Sri

-
- iii. त्याजितमानससंगा ङंसी शिवपद भक्तिभालितपंक्र ।
गुहकरशक्त्या रुद्धप्राणा तत्क्षण धूत समस्त विकल्पा ॥
 - iv. निगमान्तवचो वेधं ज्योतिः सर्वजगत्सु व्याप्तं ज्योतिः ।
सुतगुहदृष्ट्या व्यक्तं ज्योतिः सौन्दर्याम्बासमभूत् ज्योतिः ॥
 - v. रमणमहर्षेः करसरसीज - द्रव्य मकरन्द स्फुट धारेव ।
अत्र समाधौ सौन्दर्याम्बा देव्यास्तीर्थ नवमघशमनम् ॥
 - vi. जयतुमहर्षे मातापूता जयतुसमाधिः को पि तदीयः ।
जयतुमहर्षि स्थापितलिङ्गं जयतुघलीर्थ नवमघशमनम् ॥

Ramanasramam came into being. For the son of *sakti* that was Maharshi, that constant vivifying presence of *sakti* was needed to give a sense of fulfilment to his mission and this was supplied by his mother in her Samadhi. The Supreme became the mother, *māṭṛbhūteswara*. ♦

The importance of the concept of the Mother in the Maharshi's teachings is brought out clearly in the following letter of June 9, 1931 written by Vasishtha Muni to the Maharshi from Anandashrama, Sirsi:

"Lord at play as man,

From here, pray, accept our salutations on this day of Mahapuja of the Mother. Kausalya gave birth to Rama, protector of the sages, Devaki to Sri Krishna the teacher of the yoga (attunement); Renuka gave birth to the Teacher Parasurama, a life-long celibate and Mayadevi produced Buddha, the sage of the Sakyas who gave refuge to all beings. Mother Mary gave birth to the son of God who bears the burden of sin of all devotees. Likewise, for the welfare of the world, for removal of the darkness of ignorance, for the casting away of all ill-conceived notions, for the realisation of the Truth, thy mother gave birth to thee endowed with all these excellent qualities. To her, to Saundaryamba, the beloved wife of Sundara, our salutations. Salutations to her Samadhi and to the Lord Matrubhuteswara, installed on it. Salutations to her worshippers and salutations to the devotees of Ramana."

The Kundalini Sakti in Vasishtha Muni became awake; it sped through the spinal channel to the top of the head, broke the skull and mingled with the universal Sakti. The mother of the Maharshi, liberated, became the Sakti and provided the *pīṭha* for the Maharshi and his teachings.

The yoga of both which began as the search for the essential unity in diversity found its fulfilment in seeing the unity manifested as diversity.

PROPAGATION

If it were not for Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, the world might not have discovered the Sage of the Modern Age. Like the many Siddhas of yore who are reputed to be still in the caves of Arunachala, helping mankind unknown to the world, the Maharshi also as the simple Brahmana Swami would have led a life of serene seclusion, somewhere in Arunachala far away from the madding crowd. But this was not to be.

The Maharshi was a spontaneously self-realised soul and he had nothing to do or accomplish *na tasya kāryam karanam cha vidyate*. But out of his infinite compassion he chose to live on normally, a man among men, in the world, after liberation, *jivanmukti*. This is the sacrifice of the Supreme Person, that the Rig Veda speaks about in the famous Purusha Sukta, the Godhead condescending to meet humanity half-way. Ganapati Muni on the strength of his realisation proclaimed the Maharshi as an incarnation of Skanda. But divinity lay lightly on the Maharshi, *devatāmsam api namra chestitam*. "Though an aspect of the Godhead, how he deports himself with such modesty!" wondered the Muni.

On the other hand, Ganapati Muni had an air of charm and majesty about him. There was grace in his gait, sureness in his speech. When he spoke, perhaps the gods came down from on high and listened. His voice had an unearthly timbre, an ethereal magnificence which beckoned the soul of the listener to feast on the music of the spheres. When the Muni initiated someone into a Mantra, there was no necessity for that person to carry on with the *japa*, the constant repetition of the

Mantra. From the moment the initiation was done, the voice of the Muni that articulated the Mantra continued to reverberate ever afterwards in the heart of the disciple. And so many disciples gathered under his protecting umbrella, some enthralled by the beauty of his voice and some enchanted by his magnificent personality. So profoundly learned and yet so humble, Nayana was open-hearted like a child and tenderly affectionate towards all his disciples. And all his disciples became automatically the devotees of the Maharshi.

The Maharshi was for most of the time indrawn, steeped in the silence of the Self. He was like a waveless ocean plunged into its own depth. But he acted through the Muni. In fact the Muni derived the Sakti, the force necessary for his activities, from the profound *shānti* of the Maharshi. In the eyes of the Maharshi which destroyed the ignorance of the devotees, he saw the play of Durga, in his face of a thousand expressions he perceived the presence of Lakshmi and in his voice he realised the unmanifest supreme *parā* form of Saraswati.¹

When Vasishtha Muni was staying in Anandashrama at Sirsi, he was constantly surrounded by disciples, devotees and admirers.

Spiritual experiences began to happen to everybody around, irrespective of their inclination, training or background. Supernatural phenomena occurred and were witnessed in the most casual way. Many who had not heard of the Maharshi, had his darshan in meditation and in dreams. They also experienced the supremely peaceful presence of Maharshi.

-
1. देवी शक्तिरियंदृशोः श्रितजन ध्वान्तक्षया धायिनी
देवी श्रीरियमम्बुजाक्षमहिषी वक्त्रे सहस्रच्छदे ।
देवी ब्रह्मवधूरियं विजयते व्याहारगूढ परा
श्री रमण चत्वरिंशत्

A letter written by the Muni to the Maharshi on 10-3-1931 from Sirsi throws a flood of light:

"Lord Guha incarnate,

Bhagavan would have known how my *tapas* has been progressing from the letters of Sundara Pandit, Viswanathan and Kapali. For the past three days experiences, especially satisfying, have been happening to all of us and to me in particular. Many have been having the vision of Bhagavan Maharshi in their dreams. All firmly believe that this progress is all due to the gracious look of Bhagavan.

Master, this poise of mine accomplished by the grace of thy look, I understand, is on the gnostic plane. I experience the self in the heart cavern quite clearly separate from the body. Even then the experience as an individual in the world has not gone. Therefore I do not consider that this poise of mine is an integral one. May the Maharshi himself grant this to me by his look of Grace which is capable of functioning even from far away. My previous experience was marked by profound ecstasy accompanied by a stream of force. But my present ecstasy seems to have a lightness about it and a flow of light and vigour. I firmly believe that the Gods moved by the gracious look of Sri Maharshi are purifying and preparing me for the fulfilment of the great task. May Bhagavan be pleased to turn his look of Grace towards me as a reply to this letter.

A servitor of Bhagavan,
vasishta ganapati".

What is the Great Work mentioned by the Muni here? Firstly, he had an unending spiritual quest. He wanted to find out who he was and why he had taken birth in this hoary land of great sages and seers. And what exactly was his mission? His heart wept at the plight of his countrymen. He first wanted freedom for his motherland from the foreign yoke and then freedom from all social shackles and superstitions. He wanted

to remove untouchability, uplift the outcast and work for the emancipation of Indian women. Lastly he wanted to propagate and establish in this great land the true Vedic religion, the real heritage of the people of this country. The Muni was convinced that all these could not be accomplished by any human effort or means, however powerful it might be. The sanction of the Divine was required. And it was only through *tapas* one could know the Divine Will in the scheme of things. And the *tapas* could be carried out with success, only by the grace of the Maharshi.

A modern representative of the hoary past, the Muni was famous for his rational approach to matters spiritual and for his scientific bent of mind. A versatile genius, he could straight go to the heart of a subject and have an instantaneous mastery over the whole matter. A born poet, he could compose verses extempore on any subject. No wonder, he gave expression to his seekings and aspirations in the form of spontaneous verses. A stylist of rare elegance and simplicity, he made the ancient Sanskrit language alive and current, a vibrant vehicle of the deepest emotions and the noblest aspirations of modern man. Blazing a new trail in Sanskrit literature and poetry, he was the author of devotional poems containing many thousands of verses like *umāsahasram* and *indra sahasram*. But he did not write for fame or name. He wrote because expression was his very life-breath. But all his literary compositions came out as a part of his *tapas*. That was how Ganapati Muni propagated his ideas, spread his influence over the length and breadth of the country and made the grace of the Maharshi available to one and all.

As far as the Maharshi was concerned, he did not spell out his mission in such detail. His very presence in the world was his message. In those early days he rarely spoke. Around him there was a deep ocean of silence in which every thing got

submerged. But his eyes were ever eloquent as they communed with all beings that came within his purview. To a superficial observer the Maharshi looked indifferent and unconcerned. But what concern he had for his fellow-beings was known only when the Maharshi was moved to speak out either by an inner impulsion or in response to the earnest entreaties of sincere seekers. Thus came into existence those soul-stirring Tamil poems of deep devotion like *aksharamaṇamālai*, *Arunāchalanavamanimālai*, *ashtakam*, *padikam* and *pancharatnam* and poems of deep spiritual and philosophical import like *upadesa undiyār* and the epoch-making *ulladu nārpadu*.

The Maharshi had no higher education in the formal sense and was no scholar in the accepted sense of the term. But he had attained the knowledge, knowing which all this is known *yasmin vijñāte sarvam idam vijñātam*. The writings of the Maharshi are not of the intellect. Like the Mantras in the Vedas and the *pāsurams* of the Alwars and Nayanmars, they are *hṛdā tastāh* carved out of the heart, the seat of the real 'I'. Judging from the vast erudition, sweeping scholarship and the profundity of thought displayed in the Tamil verses, one will easily rank the Sage of Arunachala as one of the outstanding poets the Tamil literature has produced. His catechism in trenchant Tamil *nānyār* (Who am I?) is a classic in the spiritual literature of the world.

All these phenomena, one can perhaps explain by saying that after all Tamil was the mother tongue of the Maharshi. But how to explain the phenomenon of his composing in the Sanskrit language? The Maharshi had no knowledge of Sanskrit and he was not familiar with the intricacies of Sanskrit Poetics. Yet, without volition, he gave expression to his first verse in Sanskrit "*hṛdaya kuharamadhye*" carrying in a nutshell the essence of his teaching. In the same way he uttered *Arunāchala pancaratnam* the Five Gems on Arunachala, in the

beautiful Sanskrit metre called *āryā giti*. After some time he rendered the essence of the Teaching *upadesa sāram* succinctly in Sanskrit in the lilting *supraṭiṣṭhā* metre. All these verses in Sanskrit composed by the Maharshi were elegant, flawless, perfect in all respects, conforming to the canons of Sanskrit poetry. They evoked the admiration of the great Kavyakantha himself.

Only when he felt it was necessary, the Maharshi spoke or wrote. When stupid or irrelevant questions were asked, the Maharshi did not choose to reply. When simple innocent folk asked questions, the Maharshi understood their sincerity and gave replies suited to their level of understanding. But when earnest, serious seekers asked questions to clear their doubts, the Maharshi responded graciously, explaining the profundities and subtleties patiently. But many found that, the moment they were in the Maharshi's presence, they got the answers to the questions they had intended to ask. All the doubts were dispelled and the mind became clear.

But man is primarily a mental being, 'full of mind, leader of the vital body', *manomayah prāṇasarira netā*, as the *Upanishad* says, and he wants conviction first at the mental level. It is our good fortune that there were earnest, spiritual seekers around the Maharshi, in the early days, who could draw him out with serious, meaningful questions. It is still more fortunate that a spiritual person of eminence like Vasishtha Muni was among them, who put the dialogues on record and the result was the work *Sri Ramana Gīta*.

Composed by Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, Sri Ramana Gita records the instruction of the Maharshi on various subjects of spiritual importance in answer to ardent queries addressed by the devotees and disciples. The work consists of 300 verses in elegant flowing Sanskrit, divided into eighteen Chapters, each mentioning the occasion and the background. The questions are often intricate, relating as they do to the

deepest experience in Yoga, and involve very subtle perception and analysis. The Muni gave to the work the appellation 'Gita' as like Bhagavad Gita, it deals with no particular religion, but with the eternal quest of man, his doubts and aspirations and the ways open to him to reach the goal. The Avatara of the present age, the Maharshi, is the Teacher in the Ramana Gita. The second chapter of the work contains, like a diadem for the whole composition, the Maharshi's spontaneous Sanskrit verse *hṛdayakuharamadhye*, imparting the Master's teaching in a nutshell. Amongst the verses of the last chapter, the verse *vedādipākadamanottara* expounds the Mantra of the Maharshi in symbolic language, which the Muni made explicit later in his commentary *gurumantra bhāṣya*. Happily the whole composition has been commented upon by the Muni's illustrious disciple, Sri Kapali Sastriar and the commentary *Ramanagīta prakāsha* verily throws a flood of light on the philosophical concepts and spiritual import that are embodied in the grand teachings imparted by the Maharshi.

Vasishtha Muni wrote also a commentary in Sanskrit on Maharshi's *upadeśa sāram*, which the latter had himself composed in Sanskrit. The Muni began and finished the whole commentary during the course of a lunar eclipse on a Sunday evening in Arunachala. The Maharshi's Tamil poem *ulladu nārpadu* was according to the Muni an epoch-making work. But it was in Tamil and could be appreciated only by those who understood the language. Ganapati Muni undertook to render it in the Sanskrit language so that it might reach a wider audience and find a permanent place in the spiritual literature of India. The result was *sat-darshanam* in mellifluous Sanskrit verses in the beautiful *upajāti* metre which is a faithful rendering of the Tamil text and yet appears almost like an original composition of the Muni.

Sat-darshanam was composed by Sri Vasishtha Muni during

his sojourn in Anandashrama, Sirsi, along with his disciples. As soon as the work was finished by the Muni, it was followed by a commentary by his great disciple, Sri Kapali Sastriar who also was staying with the Muni at that time in Anandashrama. The letters written by the Muni from there to the Maharshi at that time give the proper setting to the whole composition. The letter of 17th March, 1931 reads as under:

“Lord, Master of the Universe,

I had an impulsion from the heart to send to the Maharshi's presence a letter every week.

Sat-darshanam was completed on Saturday. As far as possible the import of the immaculate verses of Bhagavan was caught in the *upajātis* there. If there is anything of quality in my translation, it is the Grace of Bhagavan. From that Saturday onwards my vision has become extraordinary. I seem to see all things as one existence. I pray to Bhagavan that this practice may get firmly established and end up as realisation. I see the changes of form, etc. of the one Truth like bubbles on the surface of water. I shall try to leave them and experience the pure existence.

I am,

vāsishtha, who craves for Thy grace.

The letter of 7th April, 1931 says:

Lord belonging to the clan of Parasara,

Here all are well by the grace of Bhagavan. Child Kapali has started his *tīkā* (Notes) on *sat-darshana*. I have indicated that considering the greatness of the original text the appellation *bhāshyam* (commentary) only will be appropriate. Says Kapali “The more one studies, the more profound appears *sat-darshanam*.” I understood its profundity even at the time of its composition (in Tamil). Though small in size the work is aphoristic containing the secret of great philosophies and of

Yoga. Here there is no condemnation of other people's stand. Even then in a strange way all the other people's notions are subordinated. The arguments advanced here touch the hearts of the elite and the commoner alike. By and large, no text of authority has been quoted. Even so the text appears as an epitome of the essence of the Vedas. In order to explain this, the commentator has a lot of things to bring out. A lot of new light has to be thrown. And the work should not become unwieldy. Topics should not be left out, their importance has to be demonstrated. Child Kapali can bear all this burden quite ably provided a ray of the peerless glance of Bhagavan is there.

In his letter of 28th April, 1931 the Muni wrote:

The commentary on *sat-darshanam* by Kapali is progressing. Deva wrote in his letter that Bhagavan considered my rendering of the verses in *sat-darshanam* was quite in accordance with the import of the original. This gave me great encouragement. Kapali's commentary written so far is replete with an uncommon beauty. Deva wrote that my quotation of the Tamil verse in the course of explaining the concept of Guha and Ganapati drew a gracious smile from the Maharshi. He had the good fortune of seeing the smile-lit face of the Maharshi. That news itself delighted our hearts.

And in the letter of 1st July, 1931.

The commentary of child Kapali gave me special satisfaction. I trust that it will touch the heart of Bhagavan as well.

And at the end of the composition *sat-darshanam*, Vasishtha Muni described his writing as a clear surface receiving and reflecting the bright rays of superhuman words that emanated from the self-luminous Maharshi.¹

1. अमानुष श्रीरमणीय वाणी मयूखभित्तिर्मुनि वाग्विभाति ।

It is no exaggeration to say that those who want to understand the message of the Maharshi in its pristine purity have to drink deep at the fountain sources of the Muni's writings on the Maharshi.

Let us close with this letter of 22nd July, 1931 which portrays the Muni's intense devotion to the Maharshi:

"Lord, dear to the Devotees,

The greatness of Mantra japa has been experienced. The essence of yoga has been perceived. The meaning of Sastras has been gone into thoroughly. Tapas has been performed with one-pointed concentration. The play of Kundalini force has been witnessed. The birth place of 'I' has been examined. The inner evolution has been observed in silence. All notion of difference has been cast away. Attachment to sense-objects has been rooted out. Fickleness has been put down. Stability has been practised. Still I am not satisfied. Now I am desirous of getting satisfaction only through Devotion. For that, there are three objects. The first is Bhagavan Maharshi. The second is Indra, the Lord of the Universe. The third is this Bharata land, the Mother Divine.

Thy ancient Devotee,
Ganapati.

Who could believe that the Muni and the Maharshi both were the products of this Twentieth Century civilisation? They came as shining messengers of the eternal values of life, to assure man that he has not been given up, that he is still loved by his creator.

जयतुभरतक्षोणीखण्डं विषाद विवर्जितं
जयतुगणपस्तस्यक्षेमं विधातुमनामुनिः ।
जयतुरमणस्तस्याचार्यो महर्षिकुलाचलो
जयतुचतयोर्मातापूता महेशाविलासिनी ॥

“May this sub-continent of Bharata shine forth, free from all affliction! May Ganapati Muni who is solely devoted to her welfare shine forth! May his Master Ramana, the superb Mountain of a Maharshi shine forth! May their Holy Mother the consort of the Lord Supreme shine forth!”

PART II

UPADESA SARAM

Upadesa sāram is a composition of thirty verses in Sanskrit written by the Maharshi himself on the essence of the Teaching. The verses are in the lilting *supratishthā* metre and take the aspirant gradually step by step to the highest, the poise in the Self. The Muni wrote a short and lucid commentary on the verses and the work is available in print. For the first time, a translation in English of the Muni's *bhāshya* is provided here.

A translation in English is given for the original verse as well as for the commentary. Certain words occurring in the commentary are explained in the Notes.

1. कर्तुराज्ञया प्राप्यतेफलम् ।
कर्मकिंपरंकर्मतज्जडम् ॥

The fruit is obtained by the command of the Master of Action. Is action supreme? The action is a thing inert.

This attempt is to refute the doctrine dear to the *mimāṃsakās* that the importance of action is in its giving the result. The fruit of action is obtained by the command of the Lord, the Master of action. Is action supreme? 'No' is the import. The action becomes inert. Here inertness has been pointed as a cause in order to show that the supremacy of action is non-existent. Or we can say that as the action is inert, it cannot be supreme.

But we are not arguing about the supremacy of action. Our argument is only this, that the importance of action lies in its giving the result. Let not action be supreme. Even then it is capable of bearing fruit through the *apūrva*¹ produced from it. Only thus, the authoritative words of the Veda would become meaningful.

(If this is the stand taken) it is not correct. It would be appropriate if statements like "sacrifices like *jvotiṣhtoma* procure for oneself a place in heaven" are taken just to mean that the great Lord depending on action confers good and bad results.

Also it can be said that conferring on all, good and bad results is not different from governing the world. That which governs the world is the Supreme. That is why those who argue for action use the word *daiva*² to denote the *apūrva* produced from it. Maharshi also when he questions the supremacy of action indicates that *apūrva* only, as action and *apūrva* are not separated in common dealings. Therefore, it is

not possible for the objector to say that he is not talking about the supremacy of action. This is the import. The *apūrva* fabricated by the *mīmāṃsakās* is not supreme, as it is inert. It cannot also independently confer good and bad results. It is superfluous as without any contradiction to the authoritative statements, it can be said that the Lord, depending on action, confers good and bad results.

2. कृतिमहोदधौ पतनकरणम् ।
फलमशाश्वतं गतिनिरोधकम् ॥

The transient fruit is the cause of falling into the great ocean of action. It obstructs the (attainment of the) goal.

The fruit, the result of action is transient, as it diminishes by enjoyment and has misery as remanant. It becomes the cause for falling into the great ocean of action. If the fruit is eternal, then there is no returning back. The import is that as the fruit is transient, subject to the remanant misery there takes place the returning back. So it obstructs the goal. The implication is that it acts as an obstruction, an obstacle in the path from where there is no turning back, to the goal of supreme state.

Here Bhagavan says that the transient fruit alone, not action, is the cause of the fall. It has to be understood that Bhagavan holds blameworthy only action done with desire for result.

3. ईश्वरार्पितं नेच्छयाकृतम् ।
चित्तशोधकं मुक्तिसाधकम् ॥

(Action) dedicated to the Lord and not done with desire purifies the mind and effects liberation.

Dedicated to the Lord, the overlord of the Universe thus: “Thou art the fruit of this action. Employ it in the affairs of the world as thou desirest”; without desire. There is no dropping off of *na* in *necchayā* as in *naika* etc.³ The action thus done purifies the mind. It also becomes a means of effectuating *mukti*, release from the bonds of *samsāra*. When the mind is purified, liberation is easy to attain.

4. कायवाङ्मनः कार्यमुत्तमम् ।
पूजनं जपश्चिन्तनं क्रमात् ॥

The action of the body, word and mind, viz., worship, *japa* and meditation are respectively superior.

The action is differentiated. The action of the body is worship, the action of the word is *japa*, the action of the mind is meditation. Thus the import has to be taken. In the same order each one is superior to the other. The first action is worship. The action of *japa* is superior to worship. And superior to *japa* is *dhyāna*, meditation. In *japa* is included prayerful chant.

5. जगतईशधीयुक्तासेवनम् ।
अष्टमूर्तिभृद्देवपूजनम् ॥

Serving the world with the idea of God, is the worship of the Divine bearing the eight forms.

In the last verse, the word ‘worship’ denoted the usual idol worship. This would be evident as it was said to be inferior of all actions. Now in the context of worship, a special worship which is superior to all actions is described. That is to serve the world, the expanding universe with the thought that God

only is this Universe. That is to say, the worship prescribed by the Discipline of Sandilya⁴: “All this is Brahman. Everything is born from it and merges into it. Thus worship in quiscence”. It becomes the worship of God bearing the eight forms. The five great elements,⁵ the sun, the moon and the embodied soul are said to be the eight special forms of the Godhead. As all this universe is pervaded by all these forms, serving the universe becomes the worship of the Divine in his eight forms. This, of course, is integral worship. This has not been included in the worship mentioned in the previous verse; that was inferior to everything, this is superior to all. This is a part of *dhyāna*, meditation, as the singly formulated thought is important here. The usual worship is done to a form, a small part of the earth which is one of the eight forms of the Divine and it is effected physically, by the body. But this worship is done integrally to all the forms of the Divine and it is effected in the thought, by the mind. This is the special difference between these two ways of worship.

6. उत्तमस्तवादुच्चमन्दतः ।
चित्तजं पथ्यानमुत्तमम् ॥

Meditation on *japa* born of the mind is superior to the supreme chants of prayer and to the loud and low mutterings.

To the supreme chants of prayer, the true Vedic ones or other similar visions of the seers, to the *japa* done in a loud voice, low voice or inaudible mutterings, the mental *japa dhyāna* is superior. The word *japa dhyāna* is compounded to mean *japa* which itself is *dhyāna*, meditation and not a combination of *japa* and *dhyāna*. For *dhyāna* is not different from mental *japa*. *Dhyāna* that is mentally doing the *japa* is

superior to chanting in a loud voice or muttering in an inaudible tone. We have to infer that out of the three forms of *japa*, each one is superior to the preceding one, in the order mentioned.

7. आज्यधारयास्त्रोत्तसासमम् ।
सरलचिन्तनं विरलतः परम् ॥

Like the flow of ghee, like the stream of water, constant natural meditation is superior to an intermittent one.

Like the flow of ghee and the current of a river, easy natural constant thought is superior to a meditation now and then broken in the middle. Even in good meditation, the one without a break is commended and not an intermittent one. Comparison to the flow of ghee is to indicate the sticking endearment of relationship in the form of devotion, during meditation. Comparison to the current of water is to indicate immaculate purity.

8. भेदभावनात् सोऽहमित्यसौ ।
भावनाऽभिदा पावनीमता ॥

Instead of meditating on the difference, if meditation is done without difference as 'I am He,' it is considered sacred.

Again, a speciality in *dhyāna* is mentioned. In meditation, the meditator imagines God as different from him and then meditates on Him. Instead, if meditation is done without difference as 'I am He', that is the meditator and God are not different, such a meditation is considered sacred. The import

is that the meditation done without any difference between the object of meditation and the meditator is superior to the one where the meditator and the object are differentiated.

9. भावशून्यसद भावसुस्थितिः ।
भावनाबलाद् भक्तिरुत्तमा ॥

From the strength of meditation arises a supreme Devotion, a well-set poise in the true being devoid of mental construction.

From the strength of meditation, that is meditation where the meditator and the object are not differentiated, results a well-set poise in the true being devoid of mental construction, which is supreme Devotion. From the logic of the remainder, it follows that devotion arising in the meditation where differentiation is made, is inferior.

10. हृत्स्थलेमनः स्वस्थताक्रिया ।
भक्तियोगबोधाच्चनिश्चितम् ॥

The action is to set the mind in its own place at the heart centre. Devotion, Yoga and knowledge result, no doubt.

Heart centre is the place of the soul, *ātma*. Mind has to be set in its own place at the heart centre. This is the action. Devotion, Yoga and knowledge result. There is no doubt about this. An established poise of the mind, by descending into the heart, its own birth place is the culminating action, the crown of all actions. It is the culminating devotion, the crown of all devotion. It is the culminating Yoga, the crown of all Yoga. And it is the culminating knowledge.

11. वायुरोधनाल्लीयतेमनः
जालपक्षिवदोधसाधनम् ॥

By the control of breath, mind is lulled like a bird in a net. This is the means of control.

Mind is lulled like a bird in a net, motionless completely under control by the cessation or regulation of *prāna*. This is the means of control. As the former statement is the subject we refer it to by the word 'this'. The cessation of *prāna* comes about when by force *kumbhaka* is practised. Regulation is achieved by constantly observing the inflow and outflow of breath. It is also known by the term *kumbhaka*, which is not contrary to the opinion held by Rajayogis. The later device only is favoured by the Maharshi, as he mentions in *Ramana Gīta*. "By control of breath is meant observing the *prāna* by the mind. Thus *kumbhaka* results by constant observation."

12. चित्तवायवद्विचक्रियायुताः ।
शाखयोर्द्वयी शक्तिमूलका ॥

Minds and breaths accompanied by consciousness and action are the two-pronged branches, rooted in force.

Minds and breaths accompanied respectively by consciousness and action, that is, minds accompanied by consciousness and breaths accompanied by action are the two branches, whose root is the Sakti of the Lord, His Force. The import is that the minds represent the branch of Knowledge Force of the primordial Sakti while the breaths represent the branch of Action Force. Minds and breaths have been indicated in plural

on account of so many people having them. This is the purport. As the mind and breath are the two branches of the Lord's Force, both of them are capable of becoming paths to attain the great Sakti.

13. लयविनाशने उभयोरोधने ।
लयगतं पुनर्भवति नो मृतम् ॥

Merger and Destruction are the two kinds of control. That which merges comes back again—not that which is destroyed.

Merger and Destruction are the two kinds of control. The compound is formed by the elision of the middle word.⁶ The mind, this is understood, that merges is born again. That mind which is destroyed does not take birth. Merger means the mere withdrawal of the mental activities. For a Yogi who has merged his mind, *samādhi* and working state happen alternately. Destruction is the abolition of the 'I' sense which is the root of all activities. For a Yogi who has destroyed his mind, the state of *samādhi* is constant.

14. प्राणबन्धनाल्लीनमानसम् ।
एकचिन्तनान्नाशमेत्यदः ॥

By control of *prāna*, mind gets merged. It gets destroyed by the one thought.

As said in the previous verse, by control of breath, either by cessation of *prāna* or by regulation of *prāna* the mind becomes merged. It gets destroyed by the one thought, by contemplating on the oneness with the soul. Control of *prāna* causes only the merging of the mind. It does not cause the

destruction of the mind. Contemplation of the oneness in the merged mind leads to the destruction of the mind.

15. नष्टमानसोत्कृष्टयोगिनः ।
कृत्यमस्तिकिं स्वस्थितियतः ॥

Is there anything to be done for the excellent Yogi who has destroyed his mind and attained his own state ?

Is there any action to be accomplished by an excellent Yogi who has destroyed his mind and has reached the poise in his Self? The purport is that when the mind is destroyed, there remains nothing to be done.

16. दृष्ट्यवारितंचित्तमात्मनः ।
चिह्नवदर्शनं तद्वत् दर्शनम् ॥

Mind turned away from things to be seen becomes the vision of consciousness of the Self. That is the vision of the truth.

Turned away from things to be seen, an indrawn mind becomes the vision of the consciousness of the Self.

By a process of negation the mind turns away from the sensory objects and by affirmation becomes the vision of the consciousness of the Self. If the mind is not going outwards, if it does not fall into sleep and is indrawn then it culminates in the form of the vision of the consciousness of the Self. And it is said that which is the vision of the consciousness of the Self is the vision of the Truth.

17. मानसंतुकिं मार्गणेकृते ।
नैवमानस मार्गं आर्जावात् ॥

If a search is made to find what the mind is, there is no mind at all. This is the path, as it is straight.

When an enquiry is made to find out what is the mind, that is, of what form it is, nothing like a mind remains at the end. The enquirer himself is the true form of the mind. It is only his special ray, emanation. At the time of enquiry, the emanating ray converges in the Self. Then there is no mind at all. Thus teaches Bhagavan. This is the path as it is straight.

18. वृत्तयस्त्वहं वृत्तिमाश्रिताः ।
वृत्तयो मनो विदध्ययहंमनः ॥

All mental activities depend on the activity of the 'I'. The activities are the mind. Know therefore that the 'I' is the mind.

All mental activities depend on the activity of the 'I', on the 'I' concept. Their roots are there. That is their natural state. When the activities expand and manifest in the work a day world, they are the mind. Therefore, know the mind as the 'I'. As all activities are dependent on the activity of the 'I', mind is of that form. The meaning is that it culminates in the form of 'I', the natural state of all activities.

19. अहमयंकुतो भवत्तिचिन्वत् ।
अयिपतत्यहं निजविचारणम् ॥

Where from does this 'I' come? For one who seeks this, the ego-sense falls. This is Self-enquiry.

This 'I', ego sense, the activity of the 'I'—where-from does this come? For one who seeks this, enquires the 'I', the ego-sense falls, perishes. This alone is Self-enquiry. *ayi* is used to address the disciple. Here also, as the whole statement is the subject, we denote it by 'this'.

- 20 अहमिनाशभाज्यहमहंतया ।
स्फुरतिहृत्स्वयं परमपूर्णसत् ॥

When the ego-sense perishes, the supreme integral Existence as the heart itself throbs with 'I', 'I'.

When 'I' the ego-sense, the root of all mental activities perishes, the supreme integral Existence in the form of the heart itself throbs, sparkles with the sense of the 'I' 'I'. What, if the 'I' perishes, how again is another 'I' possible? We shall explain. The ego-sense is not different from individuality. It is twofold, one pertaining to the mind and the other pertaining to the Self. When the 'I' sense is in the mind, there is no 'I' sense in the Self. When it ceases in the mind, the individuality of the Self shines forth. Therefore, it is said that when one 'I' perishes, the other 'I' sparkles with the 'I' sense.

21. इदमहंपदाभिख्यमन्वहम् ।
अहमिलीनकेऽप्यलयसत्तया ॥

This (heart) has the name 'I', as even when the 'I' perishes daily, its existence is not destroyed.

This heart has the word 'I' as its name. The word 'I' has a derivative significance in the mind and its primary significance in the Self. The reason is given. Daily even when the 'I'-sense in the mind perishes, its existence is not destroyed. This

is the purport. Even a lay man will accept that what is denoted by the word 'I', is the Self. When the 'I' sense is quiescent, the Self is not seen quiescent. It goes on sparkling as the 'I'. Mind becomes quiescent. Thus it is demonstrated by affirmation and negation that the word 'I' has a derivative significance in the mind and a primary significance in the Self. How is it derivative and how is it primary? Mind is related to the ego-sense, therefore, there it is derivative. In the Self the 'I' shines constantly as the form of Existence, therefore there it is primary.

22. विग्रहेन्द्रिय प्राणधीतमः ।

नाहमेकसत्तज्जडं ह्यसत् ॥

The one existent 'I' is not the ignorance of the body, sense, breath and thought. All that is inert, non-existent.

The 'I' which is the One Existent is not the darkness in the form of the body, senses, breath and thought. The reason is given. All the body etc., is inert and non-existent. How can that which is inert be the Self? How can that which does not exist be the Self?

23. सत्त्वभासिकश्चित् क्वयेतरा ।

सतयाहिचित् चित्तयाह्यहम् ॥

Where is another consciousness to bring Existence to light? Because consciousness comes by existence and by consciousness the 'I' comes forth.

The doubt 'how the Existence is brought to light' is dispelled. Where is another consciousness lighting up 'Existence'?

Nowhere. There is no need for another consciousness to bring Existence to light. The reason is told. Because consciousness comes by existence. That which is Existence is itself by nature full of consciousness. Also 'I' comes forth from consciousness. The meaning is that which is consciousness is itself by nature the sense of the word 'I'. That is, the triad of Existence, Consciousness and 'I' by nature denote one and the same thing. We have mentioned earlier that the ego-sense in the mind is derivative as it is related to the ray of consciousness.

24. ईशजीवयोर्वेषधीभिदा ।

सत्स्वभावतो वस्तुकेवलम् ॥

The difference between God and *jīva* is due to guise and thought. The thing is only one as its nature is Existence.

Guise and thought create the difference between God and the individual soul. By difference in guise is indicated the different form in the macrocosm and the microcosm. The difference in thought is due to omniscience and little knowledge. Even then the thing is only one. How? The same quality of the form of Existence is partaken by both. Here that which exists through past, present and future, alone is denoted by Existence. Otherwise, may be even the transient objects we see can partake the nature of Existence, relying on their temporal existence.

25. वेषहानतः स्वात्मदर्शनम् ।

ईशदर्शनं स्वात्मरूपतः ॥

When the guise is abandoned, there comes the vision of one's Self. It is the vision of God as he is of the form of one's Self.

There comes the vision of one's Self when the destruction of the idea of relation to the cause of the microcosm takes place. It means that the experience of the Self palpable to the senses takes place. Let it be so. How can the vision of the Self become the vision of God? It is explained. Because God himself is of the form of one's Self that becomes the vision of God. The meaning is that the vision of God is none other than the vision of one's pure Self. As the Self devoid of guise is unlimited, its experience also is not limited but complete and integral.

26. आत्मसंस्थितिः स्वात्मदर्शनम् ।
आत्मनिर्द्वयादात्मनिष्ठता ॥

An established poise in the Self is the vision of one's Self. The poise in the Self comes on account of the nonduality of the Self.

In the last verse, the word vision was mentioned. The doubt, whether the triad⁷ again coming here, is dispelled. Established stand in the Self, a set poise in the Self itself is the vision of the Self. There is no occasion for the triad there. And that poise in the Self results from the nonduality of the Self. In the poise in the Self there should not be even an iota of the touch of duality. If duality appears how can there be poise full of oneself? This is the meaning.

27. ज्ञानवर्जिताऽज्ञानहीनचित् ।
ज्ञानमस्तिकिं ज्ञातुमन्तरम् ॥

Knowledge is the consciousness which is devoid of knowledge and devoid of non-knowledge. Is there difference to know?⁸

Knowledge is the consciousness which is bereft of knowledge and devoid of non-knowledge. How can there be in knowledge absence of knowledge? The reason is explained. Is there difference to know? There is none at all. In that state as there is no difference, following the popular parlance we say there is absence of knowledge. Even so that state is full of knowledge as it is of the form of an integral experience.

28. किं स्वरूपमित्यात्मदर्शने ।

आव्ययाऽभवाऽऽपूर्णचित्सुखम् ॥

If the Self is seen, enquiring what is one's form, an integral consciousness bliss devoid of birth and destruction results.

If the vision of the Self is obtained, if the poise in the Self is established by enquiring what is one's real form, there results a consciousness bliss complete on all sides, integral, not born, that is not artificial but natural and not knowing destruction. This is the description of the experience after again showing the way.

29. बन्धमुक्त्यतीतंपरंसुखम् ।

विन्दतीहजीवस्तुदेविकः ॥

The individual Self which has become divine attains here a supreme bliss transcending bondage and liberation.

One who is poised in the Self, not mistaking the body for the Self becomes divine. Only in that state, the divinity of the Self flashes forth. The Self attains supreme bliss transcending bondage and liberation. The concept of liberation is much

dependent on the concept of bondage. So in the parlance of the ignorant only that state is called as liberation. For one who has no sense of bondage and experiences, the state of liberation also is not there. That is why his state has to be called as one transcending both bondage and liberation.

30 अहमपेतकनिजविभानकम् ।

महदिदं तपो रमणवागियम् ॥

This sparkling of the Self devoid of 'I' is the great *tapas*. This is Ramana's word.

Devoid of the 'I'-ness which is the root of the mind, of the 'I' activity which does not pertain to the Self, if the Self sparkles, that is the great *tapas*.

As the Self also sparkles as the 'I' 'I', devoid of 'I' means devoid of the derivative 'I'. The sense is that of all *tapas* the constant sparkle of the Self is the highest *tapas*. This is the word of Ramana, the Maharshi. By 'this' is not meant this verse alone; the whole work has to be taken into account.

The essence of Teaching of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi composed in thirty verses is victorious, yea, victorious.

Thus the commentary on the Essence of the Teachings ends, the work of Ganapati, Vasishtha, son of Narasimha and disciple of Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.

विभवाब्दे ज्येष्ठ मासे

पौर्णम्यां भानुवासरे ।

चन्द्रोपरागसमये

भाष्यमेतदुदीरितम् ॥

In the month of *jyeshtha* of the year *vibhava* on a Sunday with full moon, at the time of the lunar eclipse this commentary was told.

NOTES

1. *apūrva*: not having existed before, the remote or unforeseen consequence of an act, which bears fruit in other worlds, cf. *brahma sūtra* III.2.38 *phalam ata upapatteḥ*, "From him (the Lord) the fruit, for that is reasonable."
2. *daiva*: This word is used to denote the *apūrva*, the unseen potency generated by the very performance of action. The mystic nature of *apūrva* is denoted by the word *daiva*. But *daiva* means Divine, coming from Deva, God.
3. A point of grammar. Instead of *anicchayā* the word used is *neccayā*. The usage is like that in the word *naika*.
4. One of the *vidyās*, disciplines, mentioned in the Upanishads. Sandilya is a teacher, cited several times as an authority in the *satapatha brāhmaṇa*. He is one of the great teachers of Agni rahasya. The spiritual discipline associated with the name of Sandilya is briefly noted in the *bṛhadāraṇyaka upanishad* and thoroughly dealt with in the *chandogya upanishad*.
5. The five great elements are earth, water, fire, air and ether.
6. Point of grammar. *ubhayavidha rodhane* two kinds of control is formed as *ubhaya rodhane* by dropping the middle word *vidha*.
7. The triad, *triputi* is inherent in everything. For a vision, there should be three things, the seer, the object seen and the act of seeing.
8. The act of knowing arises only when there is the difference between the knower and the object to be known. When the knower and the object to be known are one and the same, there is nothing to be known. Therefore, there is absence of knowledge. But as this state of absolute identity is all knowledge, there is absence of non-knowledge, as well.

SAT-DARSHANAM

Maharshi's Tamil poem '*ulladu nārpadu*' is an epoch making work. Noted for its profundity of meaning, brevity and precision of expression, the poem has a place of its own in the Tamil philosophical literature. Being in Tamil and that too in a chaste and terse style, it could be appreciated and studied profitably only by a few people. The great Vasishtha Ganapati Muni rendered the whole poem verse by verse in the beautiful *upajāti* metre of the Sanskrit language so that it might reach a wider circle of readers and find a permanent place in the spiritual literature of India. Thus *sat-darshanam* came to be written, a true and faithful rendering of the Tamil text, but appearing almost like an original composition of the Muni.

The Sanskrit version *sat-darshanam* was composed by Sri Vasishtha Muni when he was staying in Anandashram, Sirsi, along with his disciples. At that time, the Muni was in correspondence with Sri Bhagavan. As soon as the work was finished by the Muni, it was immediately followed by the writing of a commentary by his illustrious disciple, Sri Kapali Sastriar, who was at that time staying with the Muni at Sirsi. The composition of *sat-darshanam* and of its commentary figure prominently in the correspondence with the Maharshi and from that we learn the high regard with which the Muni held the work of the Maharshi and how he deemed it a great privilege and experience to have had the opportunity of rendering it into the language of the Gods.

The original Tamil text, as the name *ulladu nārpadu* indicates comprises forty verses with two prefatory verses of a

benedictory nature. On the other hand, *sat-darshanam* comprises fortyfour verses, renderings of the fortytwo verses in the original along with two concluding verses composed by the Muni. The first of the concluding verse gives the proper setting to the whole composition. It records that Vasishta Muni translated in the Sanskrit tongue the immaculate excellent work of the Maharshi composed in the language of the Tamils. The second concluding verse describes the nature of the Muni's words. These words render with ease the essence of the truth principle and bring happiness to those who pine for liberation. These words act also as a bright wall reflecting the glory of the Maharshi's speech. The Sanskrit phrase employed is *amānusha sri ramanīya vānī mayūkhabhittih*. Through this single pithy phrase the Muni, the poet *par excellence* that he is, has explained the greatness of the Maharshi, the greatness of his work, the translation and the relationship between the translator and the original author.

Let us explain: The Maharshi's speech is described as superhuman, *amānusha*. As he is a *jīvanmukta*, he is superhuman and therefore his speech is also superhuman. Even if he is considered as a man living amongst men, as he is always poised in the Self, his speech emanates from the Self and, therefore, it is superhuman. As the Maharshi is the source of all knowledge, he is compared to the sun and his speech to the rays of light. Just as rays of light fall on a wall, the speech of the Maharshi pervades fully the words of the Muni. Just as a wall receives and reflects the rays, the Muni's words are receptive to the original text of the Maharshi's speech, at the same time they reflect it truly and faithfully. The rays of the sun are self-luminous, no doubt. But in order to be visible, they have to fall on a wall. Similarly ordinary mortals cannot comprehend the immaculate superhuman speech of the Maharshi, that is *ulladu nārpadu*. They want a bright wall, the

words of the Muni, *sat-darshanam* to receive it and reflect it back to the people, so that the full glory of the text becomes visible. And there is no gainsaying of the fact that with the help of the Sanskrit *sat-darshanam* one is able to comprehend the Tamil text *ulladu nārpadu* better.

Sat-darshanam has to be studied along with the *sat-darshanam bhāshya* of Sri Kapali Sastriar. The Muni was very pleased with the commentary of his disciple and said so in his despatches to the Maharshi. The commentary is prefaced with a comprehensive and lucid Introduction. Topics of Non-duality, Creation, Bondage, the I-sense, Release, *sādhana* and *siddhi* and Grace are discussed thoroughly in the Introduction. The contents give succinctly the contents of each verse. There is an epilogue to the Introduction which admirably sums up the concept of the Individual Soul as explained in this work. Parallel passages from *upadesa sāram*, *Ramaṇa Gīta* and *umāsahasram* are cited where appropriate. Sri Kapali Sastriar concludes the commentary by paying a magnificent tribute to the Muni and to the work of translation which none else except the Muni could have accomplished. The disciple acclaims in adoration the multifaceted genius of the Master as a great poet, true to his name *kāvya kantha* who set the model and style in *stotra* literature by composing thousands and thousands of verses like *umāsahasra* and *indrasahasra*; as a vast and profound ocean of Sastraic knowledge that composed works like *visvamīmāṃsā*; as a magician who with the mystic collyrium opened out eyes to the secrets of the Deities and their *mantras*, which were long lost and which lingered in memory only by name; as one who spent all his life in the scientific enquiry of the meaning of the Vedas; as one whose speech played about, rich with potency, born out of divine inspiration vouched to him, from his very birth; as the Great Personality who conducted himself so marvelously

and as one who was an ornament to the hosts of disciples of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Let us now go to the subject matter of the work. We can do no better than quote from the *bhūmika*, Introduction to *sat-darshana bhāshya*:

“As the title of the work shows, it is a discourse on the perception on realisation of Truth. *Sat-darshana* is a compound word formed of *sat* and *darshana*, *sat* meaning primarily existence and secondarily the real and the true, and *darshana* meaning perception. It is direct perception of Truth, that is meant here by the term. Indeed, this work is based upon the Maharshi's perception of Truth, and from this it derives its title ‘Truth-perception’. But ‘*darshana*’ also means a system of philosophy, such as the *nyāya* and other *darshanās* of the post-*sruti* period. Even in this sense the work is a *darshana*, a philosophy of the Real. For the epigrammatic verses packed with profound thoughts yield a wealth of philosophic concepts furnishing sufficient material for the metaphysical basis of a philosophy that is involved in an intellectual statement of the Maharshi's attitude to life and earthly existence. As there is nothing that is really unreal, a fact that is often stressed by Sri Maharshi, this system may be appropriately called ‘Truth Realism’ or ‘Ideal Realism’.”

“It is needless to say that this *sāstra* is not intended either to refute or to support the current systems, such as the Saivite and the Vaishnavite, the *dvaita* and the *advaita*. It does not follow the method of metaphysical speculation, such as characterises the *nyāya* and other systems of the *sūtra* period. Nor does it purport, like the two *mīmāṃsās* of Jaimini and Bādarāyana to harmonise and to remove doubts or misconceptions in scriptural texts or other authoritative utterances of great souls. Like the sacred words of the Tamil Veda of Saint Nammalvar or of Manikya Vachakar and like the texts of the

Upanishads, the words of the Maharshi are an original and independent utterance based upon personal experience, and though they support and elucidate authoritative pronouncements both of the scriptures and of exalted souls, they have really an independent origin and validity, coming as they do directly from himself."

The *sat-darshana* explains the standpoint of the Maharshi very clearly. He sees no contradiction between the path of knowledge and path of devotion. Knowledge culminates in establishing one's identity with the Formless Absolute, the *nirguna brahman* while devotion is directed towards an object of worship with qualities, the *saguna brahman*. To the Maharshi the experience of the *saguna* and *nirguna* Brahman is not mutually exclusive, but simultaneous. That is why, *sat-darshanam* contains two prefatory verses of a benedictory nature, instead of the customary one, one describing the pure Absolute Being, *nirguna* and the other invoking the *saguna* form of Mahesa who annihilates the very thought of death. In the text, the Maharshi advocates two means, a *nishthā*, an advaitic poise in the Self and a complete surrender where one gets devoured by this Self. Also the Maharshi holds that the world is no illusion. For both the ignorant and the wise, the universe exists *ajnasya vijnasya cha visvam asti*. Only the ignorant one sees the truth of the visible universe alone, while the wise one goes behind to the Formless Truth that is the base and support of the visible universe.

Great philosophical truths are explained here quite simply by means of homely analogies. The Maharshi does not subscribe to the view that in the work-a-day world there is only duality and only when you realise the supreme purpose behind everything there is non-duality. The Maharshi cites the familiar story of ten men crossing a river in spate. When they reached the other bank, they wanted to make sure that all of

them had arrived safely. Each one began to count leaving himself out and got the figure nine, till some one else came on the scene and pointed out the mistake. The 'missing' tenth man was never absent, he had always been there. In the same way non-duality is the essential thing, ever present.

Leaving the present, men worry about the past and the future. This is as amusing as proceeding with the count, without counting one, says the Maharshi. The ego has its genesis in form, it is established in a series of forms, it feeds on form and it takes and leaves form as it likes. But when the form of the ego is enquired into, it flees like a ghost and vanishes. Again illustrating the method of tracking down the ego, the Maharshi says that just as a person who has dropped an object into a well, plunges headlong silently into it with bated breath, one should, controlling his speech and breath plunge into one's self and find the original form of the 'I'.

Passages such as these reveal at once the grandeur of the theme and the simplicity with which it is expounded in the text. Verily *sat-darshanam* represents the Realisation of the Maharshi truly reflected in the Realisation of the Muni.

RAMANA GITA

This is one of the important works on Maharshi's teaching by his illustrious disciple Vasishtha Ganapati Muni. It records the instruction of Maharshi on various themes of spiritual importance and mode of *sādhana* in answer to serious queries addressed to him by sincere devotees and aspirants. Most of the queries belong to the period of 1916 and 1917 when Bhagavan was least communicative. It is to the credit of the questioners that by their seriousness of purpose and sincerity of aspiration they could draw the Maharshi out and it was most fortunate that Vasishtha Muni was present on those occasions, himself at times being a questioner, to give an authentic and authoritative record of the whole proceedings.

The work consists of three hundred verses in mellifluous Sanskrit and is divided into eighteen chapters. The metre employed is mainly *anushtubh* though in the eighteenth chapter *drutavilambitam vasantatilakā*, *rathoddhatā* and *svāgatā* are employed.

The work is fashioned on the lines of *bhagavad gīta* and bears the name of *gīta*. It is also divided into eighteen chapters. A question may arise here that the appellation Gita belongs only to *bhagavad gīta* and it would not be proper to call any other teaching as Gita. But there have been precedents where teachings of spiritual import have been called Gita. Thus we have *Rāma gīta*, *Hanumad gīta*, *Ganesha gīta*, *Ribhu gīta*, etc.

The story of Dharmavyadha in Mahabharata is known as *vyādha gīta*. As Maharshi's teachings are of great spiritual

import and authoritative because of authentic experience, the work is called *gīta*.

It is called *Ramana Gīta* because the Teacher is Maharshi Ramana, and whatever Maharshi imparts, it is based on his own experience and inner vision and not based on the scrutiny of *shāstras* either past or present. This does not mean that Maharshi's teachings are not according to *shāstras*. Any discerning reader would find that whatever Maharshi says not only accords with *shāstras*, but throws light on many points in the *shāstras* hitherto obscure and unexplained. One thing has to be remembered that Maharshi's teaching does not demand as a prerequisite any knowledge of the *shāstras* or any religious teaching. Its concern is mainly with Man and his essential problem. Though questions might have been asked by each one from different view points, the answers from the Maharshi always emanate from the standpoint of the Self. As Self is the common denomination to all people in all walks of life, the teaching is relevant to all without any distinction and is the need of the hour. The primary purpose of the teaching is Self-enquiry and taking one's stand in the Self.

It is traditionally explained that man has got four purposes in life, which are known as *purushārthās*. These are *dharma* righteous conduct, *artha* the meaning and purpose of things, *kāma* desire and *moksha* liberation. The last one is said to be the supreme purpose of life *paramapurushārtha*.

According to Maharshi there is only one purpose in life for man, that is to seek the Self and remain in it all the time. *Dharma* is that which holds, *dhāranāt dharmah* and righteous conduct is the one that holds the society together. But in truth, that which holds everything in-tact is the Self. *Artha* is the meaning and purpose. Only because of Self everything has a meaning. *Kāma* is desire and the thing that a person desires most is himself, which is the Self within him. *Moksha*,

liberation is the state when the Self sparkles all the time as the real 'I'. Thus behind the four purposes of life exist only one real purpose, that is seeking the Self.

It is not the purpose of this Teaching to enunciate a new doctrine, to find a new religion or creed. Maharshi is gracious enough to share his experience with the enquirer. As his approach is so radical, you are shaken to the foundations, all your pet theories get demolished. But like some other Masters, he does not leave you severely alone after that. He gives his gracious guidance to build on the ruins and he leads you on towards finding the Self.

The questions taken up for consideration by the Maharshi are often intricate relating as they do to the deepest experiences in Yoga and involve very subtle perception and analysis. But fortunately *Ramana Gita* has been commented upon by the Scholar Yogi, Sri Kapali Sastriar, the illustrious disciple of Vasishtha Ganapati Muni and his commentary *prakāsha*, in simple and lucid Sanskrit throws a flood of light on all abstruse points and is a great help for the proper understanding of the high philosophical concepts and deep spiritual imports embodied in the teaching of the Maharshi.

The text deals with thirtyseven questions by various aspirants including the Muni and extensive and clear-cut answers to them by the Maharshi. Each chapter deals with a theme, tells the occasion, the exact date according to the Christian era in most cases, gives the background and details of discussion. But all chapters do not deal with questions and answers. The second chapter which is like a crest-jewel in the whole composition, narrates an incident in 1915 when the Maharshi gave out the essence of his teaching by means of the famous verse *hṛdayakuhara madhye*. An exposition of this verse forms the theme of the second chapter. Similarly, the fifth and sixth chapters do not contain any questions. Maharshi, out of his

own volition, without anybody asking him any questions, imparted to all those present around him the secrets of *hṛdaya vidya* and the various methods of controlling the mind. These are recorded in all detail in the fifth and sixth chapters.

Let us now enumerate the topics discussed in other chapters.

In the first chapter are discussed the importance of spiritual practice, the supreme state which is the real form of the Self and what happens when the practice is started with a desire to achieve something. In the third chapter is mentioned the most important thing to be done by man in this life which is the realisation of one's Self and the role of *japa* of *mantras* like *pranava* to achieve it. The fourth chapter deals with the great secret of knowledge and the poise of all activities in the Self. The seventh and eighth chapters deal extensively with the nature of Self-enquiry, with the fitness of persons for this, the purpose of religious rituals and rites and the purpose of the four *āshramas*, stages of life.

Here it is unequivocally declared that deliberation on one-self is the highest merit to be obtained, the sacred of the most sacred things *svavimarsaḥ param punyam pāvanānām hi pāvanam*.

The breaking of the knot in the heart by Self-enquiry is discussed in the ninth chapter while the tenth discusses the place of man in society and advocates universal brotherhood for the welfare of mankind. The secret harmony between knowledge and the *siddhis* one gets in *sādhana* is explained in the eleventh chapter. The twelfth chapter deals with the questions put by Sri Kapali Sastriar to the Maharshi and the Maharshi's subtle analysis of the relationship between *sakti* and *sākta*, the force and the possessor of force.

The thirteenth chapter entirely breaks new ground. Vasishtha Ganapati Muni's wife is the questioner here. The Maharshi

declares that a woman has an equal right with man for *sannyāsa* and the body of a self-realised woman, when she leaves the body has to be interred and not burnt. This became the authority later on to erect a *samādhi* over the corporeal remains of the Maharshi's Mother who got self-realisation with the active help of Maharshi himself.

The fourteenth chapter gives an exposition on *jivanmuktī*, liberation even when living in a body. The fifteenth discusses about the true nature of three instruments of devotion, *sravana* hearing, *manana* thinking and *nididhyāsana* desire to visualise, in their role of seeking the Self. The next chapter deals with the true nature of *bhakti*, devotion. The seventeenth chapter deals with the attainment of knowledge. Self-knowledge is not acquired daily little by little.

When practice attains maturity, Self-knowledge flashes forth suddenly like the sun. The eighteenth and last chapter contains twenty-six verses out of which twenty-four verses are in praise of the Maharshi, describing his very human and divine qualities. These are exquisite pieces of Sanskrit poetry in beautiful metres of *druta vilambitam*, *vasantatilakā* and *rathoddhatā*. The last two verses in *svāgatā* metre comprise the question and answer on the Siddhas. Amongst the twenty-four verses of praise is the famous *sloka*, *nīlāravinda suhrdā* which was later approved by the Maharshi as his own *dhyāna sloka* and the enunciation of the *mantra* of Maharshi in the verse *vedādipāka damanottara*, which was later commented by the Muni separately in his *gurumantra bhāshya*.

Thus the whole work harmonises every spiritual endeavour and philosophical concept from the stand point of the Self and is an inspiring guide to all those who sincerely aspire for the higher values of life.

VISION OF VASISHTHA MUNI

One early morning, in the Pachaiaimman temple at Tiruvannamalai, Vasishtha Ganapati Muni and other disciples were all sitting in front of the Maharshi who was, as usual, indrawn. The Muni saw a sparkling light come down from the skies and touch the forehead of the Maharshi six times. This vision made the Muni realise that the Maharshi was none other than an incarnation of Lord Subrahmanya; and immediately the poet in the Muni broke out in eight verses in the beautiful *sārdūlavikrīḍitā* metre. An English Commentary of these verses are provided here.

1. यानायात्र नकेकिनांकुलपतिः
स्नानायन स्वर्णदी
पानायक्षितिभृन्महेन्द्रदुहितुः
नस्तन्यदुग्धामृतम् ।
गानायप्रमथेद्वरास्सवयसो
नेवात्रवीणाभृतो
वासंशोणगिरोकरोषि भगवन्
क्रौञ्चादिभेत्तः कुतः ॥

The head of the peacock family is not here for your conveyance. The celestial river does not flow here for your ablutions. For drink there is nothing like the nectar of milk from the breast of the daughter of the Lord of mountains. Here are no hosts of *pramatha* of

equal age, carrying the *vīna* to sing to you. O'Lord, the breaker of Krauncha hill! How is it that you have taken abode in the red mountain?

Arunachala is the red mountain. Red is the colour of Fire. Red is the colour of the Dawn. Here in Arunachala, Siva is in the form of the element Fire and the mountain itself is said to be an extinct volcano. The dawn of illumination has broken here for so many seers and *siddhas*.

In Hindu mythology, every God has got a favourite vehicle. The vehicle of Skanda is the Peacock, the symbol of victory.

The celestial river referred to is the Ganges. Skanda has a special relationship with the Ganges as he is said to be born also from the waters of the river. He is famed as the son of Ganga, *gāngeya*.

In Arunachala, the presiding Goddess of the temple is *apeetakuchāmbā*, the mother whose breast has not been sucked. As she has not produced both her sons, Ganapati and Subrahmanya, in the way of the humans, she does not suckle them either. So here in this *kshetra* no breast feeding is possible for Skanda.

When Siva dances, his hosts known as *pramatha ganās* also dance and sing. Those amongst them of equal age with Skanda, the poet says, play on the *vīna* and delight their friend Skanda.

The poet wonders how in the absence of all these accustomed comforts, Skanda has decided to abide in Arunachala.

As Skanda is *agnibhūh*, born of Fire and as Arunachala is the seat of Fire, perhaps Skanda has decided to stay at the place of his father, which exactly the Maharshi did.

2. एकं वक्तुं मुमाङ्कवासविरहः

पाणौनशक्त्यायुधं

मर्त्यत्वं न पताकिनीचपृत्तना

पार्श्वद्वये नाकिनाम् ।

वेषोऽलंपुनरेषमुग्धनयन

प्रच्छादने भूजुषां

अन्तर्धानं मुपेषितारकरिपो

दवस्तन्यदायादतः ॥

You have only one face. You are separated from the abode of Uma's lap. There is no weapon '*sakti*' in your hand. You have become a mortal. On both sides of you there is no army of the Gods with flags aloft. Enough of this guise by which you hope to conceal yourself from the artless eyes of the denizens of the earth ! O, Foe of Taraka, where will you disappear from the co-sharer of your mother's milk ?

Subrahmanya has six faces, while the Maharshi has only one face. His usual seat is on the lap of his mother Uma, which he has now abandoned. He has been famous as the Immortal amongst the mortals; but now he is born as a mortal. His famous weapon is *sakti*, the symbol of Force. It is absent from his hands. And as the Commander-in-chief of the Gods, he should have the army by his side. Thus the God has disguised himself leaving all his usual characteristics.

The poet, Vasishta Ganapati Muni, had been conscious from his birth that he was an incarnation of a portion of the God Ganapati. He had been throughout conscious of his divine personality and so he could easily spot out his brother, Subrahmanya, whatever might be the disguise. It is alright for

the people of the world to be deceived by the effective disguise of Skanda as Maharshi. But Ganapati had been suckled at the same breast of Uma, along with his brother Skanda and nothing could escape his eyes.

Dāyāda is Co-parcener. Here Ganapati calls himself as *stanyadāyāda* Co-parcener of the property of the mother's milk.

It has to be noted that only in Arunachala, the Mother Goddess has been depicted as *apeetakuchāmbā*, but in other *kshetras* her conduct is depicted as that of any human mother.

3. केचिद्योगविदां पुरः सरइति
 प्रज्ञानिबुद्ध्यापरे
 साधुः कश्चिद्वितीतरे गुरुधिया
 केप्यङ्घ्रिपदमंतव ।
 सेवन्ते रमणाभिधानमनुज
 क्षेमाय जातक्षितौ
 द्वित्रास्त्वां गिरिजाङ्गपीठनिलयं
 जानन्तिदेवंगुहम् ॥

Some serve at your lotus-like feet as a forerunner among the knowers of Yoga, some with the idea of a great *jnāni*, others as some saint and a few others as a Master. O, one known by the name of Ramana, born on earth for the welfare of mankind ! Only two or three recognise you as the God Guha reposing on the lap of the mountain's daughter.

During the life time of the Maharshi, only two or three people had personal realisation of his avatarhood and

proclaimed the truth to others. Only from them, the idea had spread to others that Maharshi is an *avatār* of Skanda. The poet feels happy that this rare realisation has been vouched to him and he has been fortunate to be one of the two or three people who could recognise the Maharshi's avatarhood. The implication is that the Maharshi is much more than a fore-runner amongst the knowers of Yoga, a great *jnāni*, a saint and a Master. He is the *avatāra* of the age, the God incarnate on earth for the welfare of the mankind.

4. ओंकारार्थमुपादिज्ञो भगवते
 वाणीमनोहारिणे
 तातायाप्युपदेष्टुमुद्यतमभूत्
 किञ्चित् त्वदीयंमुखम् ।
 ज्येष्ठस्याद्य सहोदरस्यगुरुतां
 प्राप्तोऽसि धीगौरवात्
 सुब्रह्मण्य कनिष्ठतामपिगतः
 सर्वाधिकस्त्वं गुणैः ॥

You expounded the meaning of *om* to the Lord, the captivator of Sarasvati's mind. Your mouth was intent on imparting something to your father too. By your weighty wisdom you have now come out as the Master of your elder brother. Though you are junior, O, Subrahmanya ! you have, by your merits outstripped all your elders:

Sarasvati is the repository of all knowledge. The captivator of her mind is the God Brahma. So, there should be nothing unrevealed or unknowable to him. But even to him Subrahmanya had to expound the significance of *omkāra*, the great

mystic syllable used to express Brahman. Thus he became the Guru of Brahma. He became *sivaguru*, the Teacher of Siva himself. His tender mouth imparted some secret teaching to his father, Siva himself. What he told Brahma is well known, the meaning of *omkāra*. What he initiated his father, the great Siva even today remains a mystery. That is why the poet has used the word *kimchit* something not known. Now Ramana, Guha incarnate has become a preceptor to the Muni, Ganapati incarnate. Thus he has become the Guru of all elders, Brahma, Siva and Ganapati, though himself very junior.

5. यत्पूर्वश्रुतिपारदर्शिधिषणो
 दवैपायनोऽध्यारुहत्
 पश्चात्तबोधकलाविधूततिमिरः
 शंकरपदशंकरः ।
 तत्सम्प्रत्यखिलावनीतलजुषा
 माचार्यसिंहासनं
 देवत्वांप्रतिवीक्षते नरतनो
 गीर्वाणसेनापते ॥

The throne of the Teacher of all the denizens of earth, once mounted by Vyasa whose intellect saw the other shore of the Vedas, and later by Sankara who removed all doubts and drove away the darkness of ignorance with a fragment of his illumination, now awaits you, Commander-in-chief of gods, God embodied in a human form !

Dvaipayana, literally, born in the island is an appellation of Vyasa whose fame rests in his classification of the Vedas. Later Sankara came, removed all doubts about the *sanātana*

dharma and using only a fragment of his illumination dispelled the darkness of ignorance. The total personality of Acharya Sankara is still not known to the world and neither the extent of his realisation. He did so much in his short life using only a fragment of his illumination *bodhakalā* in his writings to dispell the ignorance all around. In the considered opinion of the poet, only Vyasa and Sankara could be called *jagatgurus* so far. Now this title of *jagatguru* has found a recipient in the Maharshi and the throne of *ācharya* has been long vacant. It is in the fitness of things that the Maharshi should occupy it and carry on in the glorious tradition of Vyasa and Sankara.

6. धर्मनाशमुपागते त्रिभुवने
 पर्याकुलेपापतः
 प्रज्ञानेपरितोगिरां पथिमुधा
 सञ्चार्यमाणेजनैः ।
 सद्भावेपरमेष्ठवरस्यचपितुः
 सन्देहडोलांगते
 द्वीपः कैतवमर्त्य केकि तुरग
 त्वामन्तराकः सताम् ॥

Now, when righteousness has been destroyed, when the three worlds are in the turmoil of evil, when people bandy about knowledge in terms of words only in vain and when the very existence of the Supreme Lord, the Father is in vacillation and doubt, who else but you could be the refuge of good people, O Peacock borne, in the mask of man !

Conditions on earth have become so bad that all right thinking people have been longing for Divine Intervention. At

this point in time you are the descent of the Godhead, the *avatāra*. You are the saviour of mankind. You are the sole refuge.

Atheism has spread far and wide. And those who profess to know think that by discussing in words, knowledge, they will attain knowledge. The age of realisation has given place to the age of polemics. Now a person like the Maharshi, has to take us back to the age of Self Realisation and demonstrate to us the Existence of God.

In the next verse, the poet prays for the Maharshi's active intervention.

7. वैराग्यं तववित्तमस्तुकरुणां
 शक्नोषिहातुंकथं
 दूष्यस्तेऽस्तु समुद्यमः पितृपद
 ध्यानंच किं तादृशम्
 कामस्तेऽस्तु विगर्हितो विनमतां
 रक्षाचकिं गर्हिता
 स्कन्दच्छदममनुष्यकिं नुसमयं
 कञ्चित्समुद्वीक्षसे ॥

Let dispassion be your wealth, but how can you abandon showing compassion? For you, directed effort may be blameworthy, but can meditation on the feet of the Father be in the same category? Let desire be contemptible in your case, but would you on that score withhold the desire to protect those who bow down to you? O Skanda masked as man! do you yet bide your time?

It was the Maharshi who said in one of his lyric writings:-

“To be silent like a stone without blossoming.

Can it be silence true, my Lord?”

The mission of the Maharshi is to live liberated, *jiva-mukta*, a man amongst other men. His ascetic qualities like dispassion etc., should not come in the way of uplifting mankind. Because the very purpose of his *avatāra* is to show compassion, preach devotion and offer protection, the Muni prays for Maharshi's speedy intervention:

8. दूरयादिकुवाद धर्मवृषते

नेतः परंपङ्क्त

दुर्भान्ते भुवनं जहीहि परितो

वर्धस्वसंसत्सताम् ।

सोदर्येण समन्वितो भुवमिमां

प्राप्तोगुरुग्रामणीः

शूरान्तः पुरनेत्र विभ्रमहरो

देवोभवानीसुतः ॥

Get away, crooked arguement! O bull of righteousness! you will not be lame any more. Leave the world, bewilderment! Everywhere may the tribe of good men increase!

The Master of masters, the Lord, son of Bhavani, the Vanquisher of Sura has come to this earth accompanied by his brother.

The world is full of crooked arguments which mislead and conceal the truth. All these will go now.

Dharma, righteousness is symbolised as a Bull. It is said that in *satya yuga*, it becomes lame in one leg, in *dwāpara yuga* it becomes lame in two legs and in *kali yuga* it stands

only on one leg, the other legs being maimed. Hereafter righteousness will be put firm on its feet.

Sūrāntahpuranetra vibhramaharah one who puts an end to the sportive play in the eyes of the wives of Sura. A poetic way of saying vanquisher of Sura. Sura was a great *asura* whom Skanda vanquished. Here the meaning is that the *avatāra* puts an end to all evil forces.

The poet feels that as he has come down on earth from God Ganapati, the Maharshi has also come down on earth at the same time from God Skanda.

The descent of the divine brothers holds for the world all hope and promise.

A SLOKA FOR INVOKING THE PRESENCE

The easiest way to progress on the path blazed out by the Maharshi's teachings is to open oneself to his influence, learn to invoke his presence and surrender oneself completely to that ineffable *sānnidhya*.

Opening itself is difficult. There should be sincere aspiration, first in the centre of one's being; and it should slowly but surely spread to the other parts of the being. Doubt and disbelief vitiate the opening. A constant awareness and sincerity are required for the purpose.

Then we have to invoke his Presence. How to do this? If a person had already seen Bhagavan, had been the recipient of his grace, the thing is easy. A mere remembrance of the fact creates the favourable vibrations and one is able to relive the past experience and feel the presence of the Maharshi. But for those who had not the good fortune to have seen him in the body, his photographs, numerous and striking as they are, may not convey the significance of the living reality.

The Tantra Shastra has devised a method of invocation, more powerful than an ordinary human memory or the most moving pictorial record.

The gods and goddesses are posited in the Supernal Ether *paramam vyoma* and they take names and forms to operate in this world constituted of name and form. Each deity has its own particular name, form and characteristics and it responds just like a person when called by name. Each deity has its own *nāda*, lines of vibration in the high supernals. The Rishi, the

seer when he meditates on the deity, comes into contact with the particular lines of vibration that constitute the deity and is able to formulate in human language, the name, the form and the characteristics of the deity. Such a formulation is what is usually known as *dhyāna sloka*, an articulated piece in the form of verse for meditation on the deity. The Dhyana Sloka is the voice of the seer, who has seen the vision and has recorded in words that line the living experience. Such a Sloka can only issue from divine inspiration and direct realisation. Thus for each deity there is one particular Dhyana Sloka, recognized and used by all those who contemplate on the chosen deity, because they are convinced that the import of the Sloka was directly realised by the great seer of the Tantra and articulated by him for the benefit of mankind. Such a Dhyana Sloka when uttered under proper conditions, becomes a vibrant vehicle through which the name, form and characteristics of the subject crystallize again and the Presence of the deity is sensed immediately.

For invoking the presence of the Maharshi we have fortunately a Dhyana Sloka bequeathed to us by the great Vasishta Ganapati Muni. This occurs in *Sri Ramaṇa Gīta*, amongst the verses which describe the characteristics of the Maharshi. (XVIII. 13).

Later, this verse with slight amendment was quoted as “Sri Ramana Dhyanam” by Sri Kapali Sastriar in his Sanskrit commentary *darpanam* on the Maharshi’s *Arunachala pancharatna* out of the innumerable verses by so many poets, all extolling the qualities of the Maharshi; why did the commentator choose this particular verse alone as a Dhyana Sloka ? .

First, the author of this verse is Sri Vasishta Ganapati Muni who was a great sage and seer in his own right. And he had accepted the Maharshi as his Master, after having had a direct vision born out of actual realisation of the Divine

Personality enshrined in the young ascetic and had claimed him as an Avatara of Guha. Secondly, the Maharshi himself quoted with approval the view of someone that this sloka deserved to be the *dhyāna sloka* of the whole Ramana Gita. To quote Sri Kapali Sastriar from his Dedication of Ramana Gita Prakasha,¹ "When I came to the verse *nīlāravinda* the Maharshi made a remark. Speaking for five to ten minutes, he stated, naming a gentleman, 'He said that the verse is quite fit to be the Dhyana Sloka of the whole Gita'. It is very significant that Sri Maharshi, who had been silent so far, quoted here approvingly the opinion of another that this should be considered a verse appropriate to describe the Maharshi himself. There are two elements in the verse which I may note in passing: one is the blooming of the eyes. The other is the Silence by which Shiva as Dakshinamurti teaches his disciples".

Here is the famous verse:

नीलारविन्दसुहृदा सदृशं प्रसादे
तुल्यं तथामहसि तोयज बान्धवेन
ब्राह्म्यां स्थितौ तु पितरं वटमूलवासं
संस्मारयन्त मघलं तमनुस्मरामः ॥

"In showering grace, he is like the moon, the friend of the blue water-lily. In the same way, in lustre he is like the sun, the kinsman of the lotus. In his Brahmic state, he reminds us of his Father abiding under the Banyan tree. Him, the moveless one we lovingly remember."

1. *The Maharshi* by Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry. (published by Sri Ramanasramam, p.61).

Even to the blue flower, not pure white, the moon is a friend. Likewise, the Maharshi's grace is available even for those whose hearts are not quite pure. His eyes shine like fullblown lotuses. With grace they emit rays cool as the moon's. When dispelling the darkness of the heart they shine like the resplendent sun. He is always in the Brahmic state. Silence is his eloquence. Son of God, he reminds one of his Father Dakshinamurti seated under the Banyan tree, expounding in silence, the principle of the Supreme Brahman to four aged disciples. He is described as *achala* unmoving, symbolised by the mountain Arunachala. Again the moon is the symbol of Bliss, the sustaining sap in all things, *ānanda*. The sun represents the blazing energy, *tapas*, the knowledge as Consciousness, *chit*. The Brahmic state denotes the Pure Existence, *sat*. Thus the Maharshi is the Divine Personality in the threefold poise of *sat chit ānanda*, come down on earth, as the son of God, to save mankind.

When one recites with devotional fervour this Dhyana Sloka of Sri Maharshi, the sound vibrations recreate the vision and the direct experience that the great Vasishtha Ganapati Muni had formulated in this verse. The unmistakable Presence, *sānnidhya* of Sri Maharshi is felt as Peace, peace and more peace.

Peace descends as a block of moonstone making the whole body brim with cool nectar. A divine glow descends making the being strong and effulgent like the sun. And one abides as a potent vastness, calm without a ripple.

PART III

SRI VASISHTHA GANAPATI MUNI: A LIFE-SKETCH

So many great men are born in this world. They are great in their respective spheres. They leave their imprints indeed on the sands of time. What is it that is unique about Vasishta Ganapati Muni? He went on the beaten track to find original signposts. Steeped in tradition, he was progressive all the time. A rare phenomenon, he was a specialist in so many fields, a versatile genius. His whole life was enveloped in miracles and mystery. Supernatural was very natural in his life and events which we hear only in mythological stories happened quite logically in shaping his earthly existence.

Vasishta Ganapati Muni was born on 17th November 1878. He belonged to a much respected family of Brahmins who for more than two hundred years had settled down in the village Kalavarayi in the Vizag district of Andhra, having migrated from their original home at Valangaiman in the Tamil country. His father, Narasimha Sastri had three sons, the poet being the middle one. We are able to gather the following details from some letters written by the Muni to his disciples, when he wrote in an autobiographical vein:

“My father’s name was Narasimha Sastri. My mother’s was Narasamamba. My elder brother was Bhima Sastri. Not that he knew the *sāstras*, he simply bore the name of his grandfather, who was well versed in the *sāstras*. My sister was Annapoorna. My younger brother Sivarama was taken in adoption by my uncle Prakasa Sastri. Sarveshwara Sastri was my another uncle. His son Suryanarayana was elder to me in

age. We have the surname of Ayyala Somayajis and belong to Kaundinya Gotra. As the clan of Kaundinas is known as Vasishthas, I call myself as Vasishtha Ganapati”.

He also said: “I was born in a family of Srividya initiates, myself being sixth in the heirarchy. Our family members were *srotriyamdārs*. They had no other means of livelihood. For the past three generations our native place has been the village Kalavarayi near Bobbili in the Vizag district. Before that we were in Amalapura Vakkalanka in East Godavari district. Earlier, we were in Nandiyal, which was in the Ceded Districts. Ramabhadra Dikshita, the author of the drama ‘*jānakī-parinaya*’ belonged to our family. Formerly we lived in the Agraharam at Valangaiman near Kumbhakonam in the Tamil country. So we are South Indians, migrated from the Tamil country and settled in Andhra, Smarta Vadama Brahmins following the Rig Veda”.

The young child Ganapati was a disappointment to his parents. A year before his birth, his mother had gone to the famous temple dedicated to the Sun-God at Arasavalli. There when she stayed for the night, she had a dream in which a woman of superhuman beauty emerged from the corridors of the temple, approached her with a shining pot of fire, gave it in her hand and vanished, when it assumed the form of a little child. In a few months after her return home, she became pregnant. The father also had a unique experience. He had gone to Banares and when he was in the temple praying in the presence of the Deity Ganapati, he had the vision of a little child emanating from the Deity and entering into him. Soon afterwards, when a second son was born to him, the father appropriately named him Ganapati, rooted in the conviction that the child was an emanation of God Ganapati himself. So both the parents expected miracles to be happening around their second child. On the other hand, the child Ganapati did

not show any promise. He was dumb, hated food, swooned often and was always afflicted with some illness or the other. But suddenly at the age of six, a native treatment of branding with iron made him alright and his faculties began to shine.

A new life began to run in the veins of the child. Immediately the child was put to learn the letters of the alphabet and he picked up reading rapidly. At his seventh year itself, the power of his retentive memory was astounding. Once he heard a thing, that was enough; it never slipped from his mind. His father, like his ancestors, was well versed and an expert in *mantra sāstra*, astrology and *āyurveda*. With such family background, proficiency in subjects like astrology came natural to Ganapati. In his tenth year, he was able to prepare the almanac. When he was twelve, he composed a poem called *bhṛṅga sandesa*, on the lines of *meghasandesa*. He composed many other verses and incessantly practised composing verses, wooing the Muse with his constant attention. Even in his fourteenth year, his command over writing was evident. Here is a sample from the writings of those times:

इहकेषांचिदेषाचेत्
नसन्तोषाय कक्षतिः ।
किमानन्दाय कक्कनां
बालक्वेकिलक्ककली ॥

“If this does not please some, well, what is the harm? Is the warble of the young cuckoo intended for the joy of the crows?”

He finished studying the classical poems and then devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit grammar and poetics. At the same time, he delved deep into the writings of Vyasa and

Valmiki. Again and again he read the *mahābhārata*. His horizon widened and his intellect mellowed with an ever deepening perception. Then he began to perceive in him a sort of hankering which was growing in him as he was growing in age. Like the ancient *Rishis*, Ganapati wanted to get immense strength and power through the practice of austerities, *tapas* through *japa* of *mantras*. Study of Ramayana and Mahabharata enforced this idea. Stories of great men from the *purānas* and *itihāsas* added fuel to the fire of aspiration and his father's austere life inspired the aspiring boy. Firm was his conviction that everything could be achieved by *tapas*.

The young boy, fired by great aspiration and desire to do *tapas* got the permission of his father to start on a pilgrimage. As per the customs of those times, he was already married by that time. Yet when he was hardly eighteen years of age, he wandered from one sacred place to another, stayed at places like Bhuvaneshwar and performed his *tapas*. His father was a great aspirant who had initiated him in many *mantras*. The strength derived by the *japa* of all those *mantras*, the power of *tapas* performed and the force of prayer and worship incessantly done made Ganapati firm in his conviction that one day the great God Siva would favour him with his palpable presence. When he went to Kasi, in the course of his pilgrimage, he got acquainted with the famous scholar, Shivakumara Pandita.

* * *

When Ganapati was staying in Kashi, he came to know that an assembly of scholars would be held in the famous city of Navadvipa in the Gauda country for conducting examinations for those who wanted to exhibit their scholarship. On the advice of his friends, he got a letter of introduction for getting

himself admitted to the examination from Shivakumara Pandita and started for Navadvipa. The letter was addressed to the Secretary of the Grand Assembly, Sri Sitikantha Vachaspati. Vachaspati saw written on the top of the letter a half verse from Ramayana praising Hanuman, *devāsurasamīkeshu bahusho dr̥sh̥tavikramah* "he has exhibited his valour in many ways in the confrontations between the Gods and the Asuras". Being a scholar of no mean order, Vachaspati understood and immediately gave permission to Ganapati to attend the examination.

The day of the examination came. A young man lean and thinly built in body entered the assembly hall with his head held high and a proud and self-assured look which took the whole audience in its sweep. As he entered, he saw an elderly person, majestic in demeanour seated on the dais. "Who is this gentelman?" Ganapati asked the person who ushered him in. The gentleman was no other than the Examiner Ambikadatta, famed for his instantaneous compositions, *āsukavi*. He began the examination straightaway by replying to Ganapati's query.

सत्त्वरकवितासविता
गोडोऽहंकश्चिदम्बिकदत्तः ।

Ambikadatta:

"I am one Ambikadatta of Gauda country, a sun amongst those who compose instantaneous poetry."

The reply was couched in the first half of a verse in *āryā* metre. The intention was that the examinee should complete the second half of the verse in the same metre, introducing himself. Ambikadatta had spoken about his skill, name and the country from which he came. He expected similar

information. Pat came the reply from the young poet making the learned audience sit up.

“गणपतिरिति कविकुलपतिः
अतिदक्षो दाक्षिणात्योऽहम् ॥
भवान्तः अहंत्वौरसः”

Ganapati:

“I am Ganapati, the patriarch of the family of poets, very skilful, hailing from the South” and then added “You are only the adopted son of the Mother, I am her legitimate son.”

Datta in Sanskrit means gift as well as ‘adopted’. Ganapati took the meaning of Ambikadatta as the adopted son of Ambika, the Mother Goddess, while as Ganapati, he was her own son.

The examination began with *sāmasyā pūrana*. One foot of a verse in Sanskrit will be given. The other portions should be completed immediately paying attention to proper sense. The first two verses were in the *anushtubh* metre.

The puzzling foot of the first verse was as follows:

स्तनवस्त्रंपरित्यज्य
वधूः श्वशुरमिच्छति
-- किन्तु अनवद्यचरिता

The daughter-in-law removing the cloth covering her breast longs for her father-in-law—yet, she is of spotless character.

Ganapati completed the first line immediately:

हिडिम्बा भीमदयित्ता
निदाघे घर्मपीडित्ता ।

Hidimba, Bhima's beloved was oppressed by heat in summer.

All readers of Mahabharata know that Bhima's father was *vāyu*, the wind. His daughter-in-law, Hidimba, Bhima's beloved was oppressed by heat in summer. Quite naturally she removed the cloth covering her breast and longed for some breeze (her father-in-law !)

The examiner had in mind *draupadi bhimadayitā*. Ganapati pointed out that Draupadi was not only the wife of Bhima but of the other four brothers as well. She will have so many fathers-in-law. Also Draupadi coming from a royal lineage will not remove the cloth covering her breast for breeze like an ordinary rustic woman in the forest. So Ganapati established that Hidimba was the correct word. He also said that if instead of the word *stanavastram*, the word *uttariyam*, upper garment would have been used, that would have been more poetic and charming.

The second *samasyā* was:

वत्सरस्येकदा गौरी
पति वक्त्रं न पश्यति ।

Once in a year Parvati does not see her husband's face.

Ganapati gave the first line:

चतुर्थ्या भाद्रशुक्लस्य
चन्द्रदर्शनशंकया ।

On the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the month *bhādrapada* (*vināyaka chaturthi* day), for fear of seeing the moon, Parvati does not see her husband's face.

It is said in *ganesa purāna* that nobody should see the moon on the *ganesa chaturthi* day. If they happen to see the moon, they will get bad name and be victims of false charges.

The third *samasyā* was:

सूर्यः शशांकेनसमंविनष्टः

-- नत्वमावास्या

Sun along with moon lost—
but not new moon day.

Ganapati who was an adept in astrology, completed the verse thus:

राहुः स्त्रिकोणेचगुरुस्तृतीये

कलत्रभावेच धरातनूजः ।

लग्नेच कोष्ठे यदि बालकः स्यात्

सूर्यः शशांकेन समंविनष्टः ॥

If in the birth chart of a child, Rahu is in places other than fifth and ninth, Jupiter in the third, Mars in the seventh house and the Sun and the Moon posited in Lagna, the child is lost in *bālārishta*.

The fourth *samasyā* was:

पिपीलिका चुम्बति चन्द्रं मण्डलम्

Ant kisses the orb of the moon.

Ganapati supplied the full verse:

सतीवियोगेन विषण्ण चेतसः
 प्रभोः शयानस्य हिमालये गिरो ।
 शिवस्य चूडकलितं सुधाशया
 पिपीलिक चुम्बति चन्द मण्डलम् ॥

Siva is separated from Sati. In despondency Siva lays for a long time on the rocks of the Himalayas. The ant hoping to get nectar licks the moon drooping from the head of Siva, as he lay on the rocks.

Thus Ganapati justified an impossible event with another impossible occurrence. The whole audience was enthralled with the spontaneous verses.

The examination proceeded. Two verses, one from *Raghuvamsa* and the other from *kāvyaoprakāsha* were given to the young poet and he was asked to give a detailed explanation bringing out all the niceties hidden in the verses.

Words charming and meaningful came in cascades from the lips of Ganapati. There was not a pause; the flow submerged the whole audience in sheer delight. Suddenly there was a slip of the tongue; where the word had to be in the feminine gender as *sarvāsām* it came forth as *sarveshām* in the masculine gender.

‘Stop’ said Ambikadatta, raising his voice and immediately objected in the form of a spontaneous verse:

अनवद्ये ननु पद्ये
 गद्येह्येऽपि ते स्खलति वाणी ।
 तत्किं त्रिभुवनसारा
 तारा नाराधिता भवता ॥

Ambikadatta:

“Your verses are spotless. your prose is charming. But yet your speech falters. Why, have you not worshipped at the feet of *tārā*, the essence of the three worlds?”

Tara is another form of Sarasvati. “Why are you not familiar with the feminine gender? Have you not worshipped the female Goddess?” asked Ambikadatta. But in his anxiety to find fault, he himself made a mistake. And his love for alliteration made him commit a grammatical mistake.

Ganapati was quick to see this. He immediately retorted.

“You have to say *sārah* and not *sārā*. For alliteration’s sake you said wrongly *sārā tārā*.”

सुधां हसन्ती मधु चाक्षिपन्ती
यज्ञोद्धरन्ती वनिताधरस्य ।
न तेऽलमास्यं कवित्वा करोति
नोपास्य ते किं दयितार्थदेहः ॥

“Poetry truly sweet, laughs at nectar, challenges honey and takes away the fame of women’s lips. Such poetry does not adorn your mouth. Have you not cared to worship the one who halves his body with the woman?”

Ambikadatta instead of using the masculine *sārah* had made it feminine *sārā* wrongly. In his preoccupation with the feminine goddess Tara, had he forgotten the Male who shares his body with her?

Ambikadatta became angry with this remark and said:

उद्येः कुञ्जर माकर्षीः
 बृंहितानि मदोद्धतः ।
 कुम्भि कुम्भामिषाहारी
 ज्ञेते सम्प्रति केसरी ॥

“O Elephant, do not make much noise, in rut. Now the lion sleeps waiting for its food, the flesh of the temples of the elephant”.

Ganapati: “Again, mistake. It should be *kunbhikumbhā misāhārah*. For alliteration you wrongly used it as *lāri kesarī*.”

समासीनोरसालेचेन्
 मौनमावह मौकले ।
 लोकः करोतुसत्त्वरं
 मत्वा त्वामपि क्रेकिलम् ॥

“O Crow, if you happen to sit on a mango tree, keep quiet. Let the world do you honour thinking that you too are a cuckoo”.

Ambikadatta’s anger knew no bounds. He blurted out:

ज्योतिरिङ्गण न किन्तु मन्यसे
 यच्चमेव तिमिरेषुलक्ष्यसे ।

“O Firefly, does it not occur to you that you can be seen only in darkness?”

किन्नुदीपभवने विभाससे
वायुना बहि. रहो विधूयसे ॥

Ganapati:

“Ah lamp, you shine alright in the house; but outside you are wafted hither and thither by the wind.”

Sri Sitikantha Vachaspati intervened and showed a way to put an end to this quarrel. He said that instead of acrimonious insinuations at individual level let the examiner and examinee poke fun at each other's communities and end the debate.

Ambikadatta began:

भदयोऽखिलोऽदयोपरिवार वध्वा
निपीय मध्वारभते विहारम् ।

“All *bhattas* (South Indian Brahmins) go to the terrace of their houses, drink wine and then start sporting with the courtesans.”

Ganapati:

असुव्ययो वाऽस्तु वसुव्ययोवा
ऽप्यमीनमी न व्यसनं त्यजन्ति ॥

“Let money go or the life itself go, these fellows do not abandon their habit of eating fish”.

At the close of the examination, Ambikadatta, a connoisseur and critic rolled into one, warmly embraced Ganapati and expressed his great appreciation in generous terms.

Ganapati was all modesty and he asked to be forgiven for all the things he had said during the debate. Ambikadatta, a typical Bengali that he was, replied laughingly "the two fish given by you in the last foot of your last verse had made ample amends". (The word *mīna* came twice in the last foot *amī na mīna vyasanam vyajanti*, much to the delectation of the Bengalis assembled there).

The grand assembly of learned men and scholars unanimously gave Ganapati the title *kāvyaikantha* (one who has poetry in his throat) and thenceforth the young poet became famous as *kāvyaikantha ganapati sāstri*.

* * *

Ganapati Sastri repaired to the South of the country in his twenty fifth year and spent five or six years in travelling. First he went to Kanchipuram and then to Tiruvannamalai. In Tiruvannamalai, he stayed for a year. Meanwhile, on two occasions he saw *brāhmanaswāmī* who was then living in Arunachala. From Tiruvannamalai he proceeded to neighbouring places and lived there for some time. From then a new chapter began to unfold in his life. Going from one sacred place to another in the South, he exhibited in those places his great skill in *avadhāna* before assemblies of learned men and groups of scholars. The Muse was at his beck and call. His ready wit and superb poetry attracted everybody. Wherever he went, Kavyaikantha made an indelible impression on the minds of his audience.

At this time he undertook the study of the Rig Veda, learnt the *riks* with proper intonation from the first rik, *agnimile*, to the last rik, *susāhati*, and also examined the Vedic commentary of Sayana. By the strength of his *tapas*, he fathomed the secrets of the *mantras* in the Veda, understood the profound

significance of the Deities and communicated these to some of his friends and disciples. Only afterwards he wrote sastraic texts on the *tarka vārtika* of Jaimini.

At this time, his greatness and glory manifested manifold. He became the recipient of the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. He himself initiated many of his disciples in various *mantras*. The moment a disciple was initiated by Kavyakantha who was an embodiment of all the *mantras*, supernatural experiences followed as a rule. The disciple was not required to repeat the *mantra* in *japa*, after initiation. The vibratory word of the Master at the time of initiation went on repeating itself of its own accord in the heart of the disciple and that did all the *japa* for the disciple ever afterwards.

Whenever Kavyakantha exhibited his prowess in *avadhāna*, as a part of the *avadhāna* he had to compose extempore hundred verses, on a given topic in an hour's time, which was taken down by writers appointed for the purpose. Out of these verses, we have now for posterity, two *khanda kāvyās* and one *ghantā satakam* preserved carefully. Here is the concluding verse of the *tattvaghantā satakam* Kavyakantha composed as a part of *avadhāna* in Balabhandeshwar, a sacred spot on the West coast, dedicated to Lord Balarama:

वेदान्तशास्त्राशतकान् सकलान् विचार्य
प्राचामृगागमदृशां मतमाददानः ।
क्षेत्रेफणीद्वर कला जनितस्य पुंसो
घण्टयज्ञतं गणपतिः कविराडकर्षीत् ॥

“Having investigated into the *vedās* and all the attendant hundred *sāstras*, upholding the views of the ancient seers of the *vedā* and the *tantra*, Gana-pati, the king of poets, composed hundred verses in

an hour's time at the sacred place dedicated to the person who was born as an *amsa* of Adi Sesha”.

In the South, Ganapati visited many sacred places up to Kanyakumari and worshipped the deities enshrined there. He lived for some time in Gokarna on the banks of the Western ocean. Amongst the places where he stayed for quite a length of time comes first the famous Bhuvaneshwar in the State of Orissa. Here when he was young he propitiated the Goddess Bhuvaneshwari by *mantra sādhana*. Here only in dream Ganapati saw a woman putting honey in his tongue and vanishing. Kavyakantha himself narrated this to his disciples and said that only after that incident, he could get complete mastery over poetry. In the prime of his age, he did austerities in the mountain Mahendra, between Andhra and Orissa. He lived for a long time in Gokarna and its neighbourhoods. In the Tamil country, in the beginning as well as in the end, Arunachala was the place where he stayed for a considerable length of time. It was the place where his Master, the Maharshi had his permanent abode. Again and again, the Muni sought the presence of his master, the Maharshi, came to Arunachala and stayed. Only in Arunachala the Muni had his tremendous Yogic experiences. When he was doing *tapas* in the Mango tree cave in Arunachala, the subtle knot in his head was cut asunder and his cranium split. Only because of the splitting of the cranium, witnessed in the person of the Muni, his disciples understood the deep significance of the *taittiriya* phrase “*vyapohya sīrshakapāle bhurityagnau prati tishtathi*”: Having separated the two parts of the cranium, he stands established in Fire as *bhuh* the earth-element”.

*

*

*

The later part of the Muni's life was mostly spent in pursuits like finding the hidden meaning of the Vedic *riks*. The way shown by him for the investigation of the meaning of the *mantras* is unique. He had a high opinion of the Vedic commentaries of Sayana Acharya. Even so, with the help of Sayana's commentary itself he demonstrated that the Rik Mantras in many places could be interpreted in a different way. He prepared an introduction to the *rig bhāshya* to facilitate the understanding of the profound sense of the *mantras*. The Muni was second to none in his devotion towards the *mantras* of the *veda* and the Vedic Seers. He perceived certain *astra mantras* (*mantras* like guided missiles) kept secret in the Veda and imparted knowledge about their superhuman effectiveness to the disciples, promoting in them faith and devotion towards the Vedas.

There was something unique about his ideas on the Veda. He held that the source of both the *brāhmanas* and the *upanishads* was the collection of *riks* in the Veda. The bifurcation into *karma kānda* and *jnāna kānda* is not correct; these two *kāndās* are only two branches of the same Rik *mantras*. Many *mantras* applied in *karma* have to be interpreted in the spiritual sense and it is not correct to interpret every *mantra* in terms of ritual. These and many other ideas about the Vedas are found in the works of the Muni.

Vasishtha Muni wrote works after critically examining the Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa. He also wrote on astrology, Ayurveda and Tantra Shastra. His unique approach to the issues is clearly evident in all that he wrote. Taking up the historical appraisal of *mahābhārata*, the Muni wrote in a very easy style a critical work called *bhārata sangraha*. On the lines of a modern novel, he wrote a novel in Sanskrit called '*purā*' adopting a scintillating and charming style. Here, the absence of long compounds and abstruse constructions

please the modern readers of the ancient tongue. He set the pace for Sanskrit writing in modern times and composed thousands of verses which could as well serve as models of *stotra* literature in works like *umāsatakam*, *sivasatakam*, *indrāni saptasati*, *prachanda chandi trisati*, Garland of Gita on Agni, Vayu, etc.

In the whole field of Sanskrit literature, Ganapati Muni held very dear and sacred two treasure-houses of knowledge. One was the treasure-house of *mantras*, the *rig veda samhita*; the other one the secret treasure—of all sastraic knowledge, the *mahabharata samhita*. “Either one should read the *mahā bhāshya* or one should govern a big kingdom”. This saying was very much to the liking of the Muni. From the point of view of composition, three commentaries were dear to his heart. The first place he gave to Patanjali’s *mahābhāshya*, second came the *bhāshya* of Sabaraswamin and the third was the *sāriraka bhāshya* of Sri Sankaracharya. Side by side with his glorious luminous life blazed forth his tireless endeavour towards social uplift, welfare of the country, unity of all religions and propagation of the true sense of *vedic mantras* and the Deities. We find these expressed in various places in his works. Long time ago, he sang:

आनने त्वदीय नामपावनाच्चपावनं
यस्यपुण्यपुरुषस्य पूरुषार्थ विग्रहे ।
सानुमन्महेन्द्र पुत्रि संमदाय भूयसे
बन्धनालयोऽपि तस्य नन्दनं वनं यथा ॥

“O, the vanquisher of the demon Mahishasura, O, the one who shares half her body with the Male, even a prison house would fetch immense joy as a celestial garden to a person of merit whose mouth

is always engaged in repeating your name, the sacred of the sacreds”.

There is no doubt that some Divine afflatus took a human body for manifestation and lived on earth for some years. We have read that Nigamanta Desika who did so much for Vaishnavism made it known through his work, *sankalpa suryodayam* that he was an *avatāra* of the bell of Vishnu. Likewise Ananda Tirtha Acharya proclaimed himself as the third incarnation of Vayu. Vasishtha Muni also says in *umā-sahasram* and in his other works that he was born as an *amsa* portion of God Ganapati.

Such was the Muni who strode over the whole country, like a Vedic Rishi of yore come to life, to propagate the paramountcy of Indra, the Supreme Vedic God and to establish the true Vedic religion; a rebel and reformer he came to bridge the ever-widening gulf between the principles and practices of Hinduism; a poet *par excellence*, he was the model for others to follow; a versatile genius, a rational traditionalist, he showed the way to synthesise science and religion; a man of God, he came down to show the Godhead in man.

We shall close this brief sketch of his life with a verse of salutation composed by his illustrious disciple Sri Kapali Sastriar:

वेदेर्बोधवते गिरां विलसितैः सम्मोद मुद्रावते
धीरेर्भारतसूरिभिर्बलवते पूर्वैः प्रतिष्ठवते ।
मन्त्रोर्मित्रवते महर्षिचरणैराचार्य लक्ष्मीवते
कव्यैः कण्ठवतेधियाधनवते कस्मैचिदस्मै नमः

“His wisdom and knowledge is from the *vedas*.
With scintillating speech he sets the seal of bliss.

His strength is founded on the valourous seers of the Bharat land and the ancients have established him. The *mantras* are his friends and his good fortune is that Maharshi is his Guru. His throat reverberates with poetry, his intellect is his wealth. To him the ineffable, salutations”.

COMPOSITIONS EXTEMPORE

Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni was a poet who could be ranked next only to Kalidasa. His ready wit, quick repartee and instantaneous replies took the form of compositions extempore, some of which have been preserved by his disciples for posterity. These have been recorded in the Muni's biography *vasishtha vaibhavam* by his great disciple, Sri Kapali Sastriar. For the delectation of our readers, we shall mention them here.

1904 was the year in which Kavyakantha did his first *ashtāvadhāna* in Madras. At that time he was staying with Satenjeri Ramaswami Iyer. One day some friends of Ramaswami Iyer, who were conversant with the Sanskrit language and had a liberal university education on modern lines, gathered in his house with a view to enjoy the company of Kavyakantha. After lunch when all of them took pan and areca nuts, as per custom, Kavyakantha excused himself by saying that he was not in the habit of chewing pan. The friends asked him for a Sanskrit verse on the subject of chewing pan and immediately the following verse shot forth from the mouth of Kavyakantha:

सुधाधिक्यं स्पृहेतश्शत्रुः
फलाधिक्यं स्पृहेतभिषक् ।
पत्राधिक्यं स्पृहेत जाया
माता तु त्रितयं स्पृहेत ॥

The *tāmbūla* is made up of betel leaf, lime and areca nuts in proper proportions. Lime has the quality of burning the tongue. So *sudhādhikyam spr̥het satruh*, your enemy wants excess lime in your *tāmbūla*. Areca nuts have the quality of causing anemia. So *phalādhikyam spr̥het bhishak*, your doctor wants excess of nuts in your *tāmbūla*. Betel leaf is a reputed aphrodisiac. So *patrādhikyam spr̥het jāyā*, your wife wants excess of leaf in your *tāmbūla*. But your mother wants all the three in your *tāmbūla* in proper proportion *mātā tu tritayam spr̥het* as she has only your good at heart.

Thus the verse at one stroke describes the medicinal properties of the ingredients of the *tāmbūla* and the proper way to take it.

Ramaswami Iyer's friend and neighbour, S. Doraiswami Iyer, was very much attracted by Kavyakantha's magnetic personality. Though a product of modern education, he was completely won over by Kavyakantha's *avadhāna* and poetry. Once he related the story of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to the Muni and at once the Muni started his instantaneous composition with the words:

डन्कन्नाममहीपतिः समभवत्
स्वर्दलाण्डु देशे पुरा

“Long ago in the country of Scotland there was a king by name Duncan” etc.

About that time, one day Tandalam Sri Subrahmanya Sastri asked Kavyakantha for a verse which would equally

apply to Subrahmanya, Ganesha, Parvati and Parameshwara. In a minute Kavyakantha gave the verse !

जगतीधरजामाता
भवतांभव्याय भूयसे भवतु ।
कञ्चिदकिञ्चनमपि
यद्वीक्षाविदधाति शक्रसमम् ॥

‘May *jagatīdharajāmātā* be for your utmost welfare—whose glance makes even a person who has nothing, equal to Indra’.

Here the pun is on the word *jagatīdharajāmātā*, *jagatīdhara* is a mountain; *jāmātā* is son-in-law; that is the son-in-law of the mountain Himalayas, Parameshwara. Or it can be split as *Jagatīdharajā* and *mātā* meaning the mountain-born Mother, that is Parvati.

Or it can be construed as one whose mother is the mountain born Paravati, viz. Ganesha and Subrahmanya.

At another time, during a conversation with the famous scholar Vedam Venkataraya Sastri, Kavyakantha spontaneously uttered this verse:

स्यतु सर्वज्ञशिरोमणिदीधिति
दोष प्रदर्शनेऽपि पटुः ।
भवतां शंकरः शंकरहरिणदृशो
ह्यसनवशास्त्री ॥

There is pun on the words *sarvajña*, *siromani* and *dīdhiti*.

“Like a new teacher proficient in *sāstras*, may the smile of Siva’s spouse which is skilful in pointing

out the flaws in the rays (*dīdhiti*) of the moon, the crest jewel (*siromani*) of the omniscient Lord (*sarvajna*), dispel your doubts”.

As applied to Vedam Venkataraya Sastri, “May this Sastri, fresh as the smile of Siva’s spouse, skilful in finding flaws even in the work on *nyāya* called *dīdhiti* of the all-knowing (*sarvajna*) scholar Sri Siromani Bhattacharya, dispel your doubts”.

When Vasishtha Muni first visited Tiruvottiyur, his disciple, Sri Kapali Sastri, showed him around the temple and explained to him about the Kali installed in the *prākāra* of the temple. The tradition is that the Goddess is in a well in front, the mouth of which is covered with a circular stone. On hearing this, Kavyakantha spontaneously composed a verse praising the Goddess in the well:

कूपेविभासिकिल कोपवति त्रियोमा
चारिष्वशेष जगदीश्वरि कालि भदे ।
बिभ्राजदादि पुरवासिनि दासमापत्
कूपादुदञ्जय पदाम्बुजभक्तमेतम्

“O Auspicious Kali, the sovereign of the entire Universe, angry with the hordes of demons, you shine in the well. O the inhabitant of the lustrous Adipura, bale out from the well of distress this servant of yours devoted to your lotus feet”.

Once, in the temple itself, in response to the request of his followers Kavyakantha instantaneously composed and sang more than fifty verses extolling the glory of the three seed-letters of the *bālā mantra*. After he finished, in the silence that

followed, people around him experienced waves and waves of sound gushing forth and immersing them in the flood of *nāda* for quite some time.

When Kavyakantha was staying in Tiruvottiyur, he received a letter from Tiruvannamalai written by his young disciple, Vasudeva (Sri Vasudeva Sastri) who was just then learning *kāvya*s and the science of poetry. He had finished the letter with a verse which ended as *vārteyam subhasahitā praharshinī cha* 'it is all good news and joyful'. He had also indicated the metre of the verse as *praharshini* by punning on it. There was nothing special or unique in the disciple's composition; at the same time it was without any mistake. Kavyakantha had the knack of encouraging people without giving them any undue praise. He replied to that letter in the same fashion by finishing it with the following verse:

वासुदेव तव नव्य काकली
पत्रमद्य ममहस्त मागतम् ।
कीरकूजितमिवाति सुन्दरं
बाल भासितमिवाति मञ्जुलम् ।

"Vasudeva, your letter like a fresh warble reached my hands today. It is very beautiful like the voice of a parrot, very sweet like the prattle of a child".

In 1909, when the Muni again came to Tiruvottiyur, in the course of conversation, Sri Kapali Sastri told him that in olden days Vedic knowledge flourished well at Tiruvottiyur and all scholars flocked to that place. On hearing this, Kavyakantha broke out in verse:

आदि पुरे विजयन्ते
वादिजनालाप मुखरित शान्ते ।
शीतल लोचनक्रेणाः
शीतांशु कलाभृतः प्राणाः ॥

“The corners of the cool eyes, the life-breath of the one who bears the digit of the cool-rayed moon, reign victorious in Adipura where from end to end echo the discussions of the arguing scholars”.

At about the same time, once when he was relating about his return from Calcutta along with his brother, Sivarama Sastri, the Muni said: “When I was young and doing *tapas*, only once, the thought of my wife troubled me. Why should I be ashamed to tell what happened?” Then he broke into a verse:

ध्यायन्नपि प्रमथनाथ पदारविन्दं
वर्षासुमञ्जलरुचममबुमुचं विलोक्य ।
क्रान्ता वियोगचलितः कविचक्रवर्ती
गङ्गातटे गणपतिर्नजगाम शान्तिम् ॥

“Though meditating on the lotus feet of the Lord of the Pramathas, in rainy season, espying heavily laden clouds of charming hue, Ganapati, an emperor amongst poets, agitated due to separation from his beloved, did not find peace on the banks of the Ganges”.

Continuing the conversation for a while, he exclaimed:

कति कति नवा पट्टयामोऽमी
 वयं मनुजाधमान्
 उदरभरणे सक्तान्नक्तं
 बधूरतिक्त्रङ्गक्षिणः ।
 इहत्तुभुवने विद्वानेकः
 परस्य पिनाकिनः
 चरणकमलं ध्यायं ध्यायं
 कृतार्थयति क्षपाः ॥

“How many men of meanest calibre do we not see engaged only in filling their bellies and craving for enjoyment with women in the nights? Here, in this world, a solitary man of knowledge spends his night profitably in constant meditation on the lotus feet of the supreme Siva.”

At another time, when Kavyakantha went along with his disciples to the sea shore, he became silent when others were conversing. “Are you thinking about something?” asked a disciple. The fourth foot of a verse came out first from the poet:

दशांदेशस्यैतां प्रतिपदमयं
 ध्यायतिजनः

“This person is thinking at every step about the plight of the country”.

Again, he exclaimed:

अरिभिरदयेः क्रान्तायैते
 मुहुर्मुहुरुद्धते
 करमविकलंदातुं धीरो
 न कोऽपि विलोक्यते ।
 क्व तव दयितास्ते ते पूर्वं
 धरे भरतादयो
 यदजित भुजादुर्गस्थाया
 स्तवाम्ब न भीरभूत् ॥

“Again and again thy enemies rise and occupy thee mercilessly. No valourous man is seen to offer thee an unimpaired hand. Motherland, where are thy beloved ones, those ancients like Bharata, reposing in whose unvanquished fortress like arms thou hadst no fear”.

Until 1907 Kavyakantha gave public demonstrations of *ashtāvadhāna*. Afterwards he turned his attention more to *tapas* though he had no aversion to the pursuit of literary studies. Once his disciple, Sri Kapali Sastriar, requested him to relate his exploits of *ashtāvadhāna*. As he went on hearing, the disciple wanted to see the *ashtāvadhāna* performed at least once for his benefit. The master agreed to show some items. As they were talking, a Telugu poet knowing Sanskrit and known to Kavyakantha arrived on the scene. After exchange of greetings, the visitor requested Kavyakantha to favour him with a Sanskrit verse in *vasanta tilakā* metre which should express the considered opinion of Kavyakantha on Poetry. As the *vasanta tilakā* metre requires a verse in 56 letters, the

Telugu poet took a slate, drew a rectangle comprising 56 squares and gave the slate to Kavyakantha. As he was pointing his finger at random to the squares, Kavyakantha filled the squares with letters, till finally all the squares were filled up. This was the result:

प्रीतिंददाति विपुलां श्रियमातनोति
निर्माति नूत्नसमयं दुरितं धुनोति ।
आर्द्रकरोतिहृदयान्यपि देवतानां
कस्मैशुभाय न भवेत्कवित्ताविदोषा ॥

“Poetry, without blemish, gives satisfaction, grants enormous wealth, creates a new society, drives away distress and melts even the hearts of Gods. To whom does it not prove good ?

When Kavyakantha placed the letters in the squares, only once he hesitated a bit. That was where the letters *nūtna* were written.

There he expressed his considered opinion about Poetry. The ancients said that the purpose of Poetry was to acquire fame, make money etc. *kāvyaṃ yashase'rthakṛte*. ‘The king creates the times’ said the ancients. Rather, the poet creates the times. He creates a new society. Thus Kavyakantha expressed his opinion about Poetry.

In 1903, in Arunachala, the reputed Panchanada Sastri who was teaching in *veda pāthasālā* passed away and his place in the school was taken by Sri Ramachandra Ghanapāthi, a great *upāsaka*. On hearing about the event Kavyakantha expressed himself in these two verses:

पञ्चभूतमयमेव विग्रहं
 हन्तपञ्चनदपण्डितो जहौ ।
 तस्यकीर्तिरिति विश्रुतं पुरा
 चन्द्रगौरमधुनाऽपि दृश्यते ॥
 रामचन्द्रघनपाठिनाऽधुना
 तस्यकृत्यममलं प्रसाध्यते ।
 पञ्चिमोदधिमुपेयुषो रवेः
 तारकानिकर कर्मिणा यथा ॥

“The scholar Panchanada gave up only his body composed of the five elements. Ah, the whiteness of the moon, formerly well known as his fame is there even now for every one to see. Just as the work of the sun who has set in the western ocean is taken up by the moon, the lover of the clusters of stars, the work of Panchanada is accomplished now without any blemish by Ramachandra Ghanapāthi”.

Kavyakantha initiated Ramachandra Ghanapāthi in the lore of *sri vidyā* and his affection towards his disciple grew as the years advanced. When after twenty five years the Ghanapāthi passed away, the Muni sang the following verses:

भारद्वाजो रामचन्द्रो महात्मा
 वेदाचार्यो नैष्ठिकः सत्यसन्धः ।
 पुण्यल्लोको भूमिमापूर्य कीर्त्या
 शोकापेतं शान्भवं धामभजे ॥

“The great soul Ramachandra of Bharadvaja clan, preceptor of the Vedas, disciplined in action, true in

speech, of meritorious name filled the earth with his fame and attained the place of all good, where there is no sorrow”.

भवतुगणपतेर्वागीशदासस्य सत्या
भजतु पदमशोकं रामचन्द्रोद्विजेन्द्रः ।
भजतुगुणपयोधेः कीर्तिशेषस्य तस्य
प्रविमलगुणसंघो वित्तवत्तस्य पुत्रान् ॥

“May the word of Ganapati who is the servitor of God come true! May Ramachandra, the best of Brahmins attain the sorrowless state! His fame remains as a repository of all good qualities. May his immaculate character, like his wealth, pass on to his sons!”

The eldest son of the Ghanapāthi was Sri Subrahmanya Sastri (Raju Sastri). Like his father he was devoted to the Muni and the Maharshi.

In 1917, the Muni along with his wife was doing *tapas* in Kundalipura (Padaiveedu). There once when he was inspecting the ruins in the environs along with Isvara Swami of Tiruvannamalai, the latter explained to the Muni about the story of a broken idol there. On hearing that the Muni exclaimed:

अर्गलासदृशदोर्लसत्प्रभा
सर्गकारि मणि कुण्डल प्रभो ।
भर्गपादपरिचारिणां पते
द्वर्गपालक नमोऽस्तु ते नमः ॥

“O Master, with jewelled ear rings that create a halo of light illumining thy bolt-like arms, O, the head of the servitors at the feet of Siva, O the guardian of the Fort, salutations to thee, salutations”.

When the Muni was in Arunachala, one day he received a telegram from one of his disciples, Subrahmanya Sastri at Secunderabad that he was seriously ill and he wanted to see the Muni. Always affectionate towards his disciples, the Muni covered the long journey by train and came to Secunderabad to see his disciple. The disciple got cured quickly in the presence of the Master. The disciple thought that he got the illness because he practised Yoga. The Muni's contention was that if there was sufficient Yoga power in the body, all illness would vanish. As the disciple wanted a verse of blessing from the Guru, without discarding the view of the disciple, the Muni gave out this verse:

अज्ञानध्वान्तानां
असह्यरोगाग्निकील सन्तप्तान् ।
भामुरशीतलदृष्टि
प्रभयापरदेवताऽवतादस्मान् ॥

“May the Supreme Goddess, with her shining cool lustre of her gaze, protect us, burnt by the flames of the fire of disease that does not brook the darkness of ignorance.”

In the year 1910, Kavyakantha gave a talk in Madras, praising self-effort as against reliance on fate. He profusely quoted from the *shāstras* in support of his arguments that one's actions depend on one's intellect and not the other way

round. In the course of his talk he praised the role of the householder, the *gṛhastha* and cited this ancient verse in support:

राजपुत्रचिरंजीव
माजीवमुनिपुत्रक ।
जीववानरवासाधो
व्याधमाजीवमानर ॥

“O son of the king, live long. O son of the ascetic, don’t live. O good fellow, live or die. O hunter, neither live nor die.”

This is a verse full of significant meaning. The son of the king, because of his wealth and power, has a happy life on earth. As the sins of the people fall on the king, even if he is a goodman, he is bound to suffer after his death. Therefore, he should live as long as possible and not die.

On the other hand, the life of the son of the ascetic is full of hardships and tribulations. But after his death he is bound to be happy because of the meritorious deeds of *tapas* etc. done by him and his father. Therefore, he should not live; he should manage to die as quickly as possible.

The householder, the good man. *Sādhu* does good to everybody. Therefore, his life is pleasant and others are kind to him. After his death, the good done by him during his life-time comes to his help and he is bound to be happy. Therefore, the goodman may live or may die. In both cases, he will be happy.

The hunter lives a miserable precarious life. Therefore, his life is difficult and he should not live. But when he dies, all the sins committed by him by killing living beings will bear

fruit and make him miserable. Therefore, the state after death also is not inviting and he should not die. So the hunter should neither live nor die.

Thus the great Vasishtha Muni illustrated the goodness of householder and the greatness of the *gr̥hasthāsrama*.

UMA SAHASRAM

This work is the *magnum opus* of Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni. He composed it as a part of his *tapas* in gratitude to the great Goddess Uma for having given him the Maharshi as his Master. And it was done in the presence of Maharshi, who was all the time steeped in his Self. Therefore, each verse of *umāsahasram* has the potency of a *mantra* and the whole text can be used for *pārāyana*, devoted recital. About the date of its composition the Muni himself said:

प्लवङ्गे कार्तिके कृष्णे षष्ठ्यां मङ्गलवासरे
स्तोत्रमेतत्समारब्धं तटेशोणधराभृतः ।
एकदश्यां शुक्लपक्षे मार्गशीर्षे रवेर्दिने
नीतं समाप्तिं विंशत्यादिनानां चतिनां मया ॥

“This *stotra* was begun on Tuesday, the sixth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Kartika in the year Plavanga and was finished on Sunday, the eleventh day of the bright fortnight in the month of Margasira by me who had taken a vow to complete it in twenty days”.

Later, as a part of his *tapas*, the poet revised this sacred text seven times. No wonder, the mere reading of it bestows all happiness on the devout aspirant. About this the poet himself has said:

यदि गायन्निमंग्रन्थमुत्तरे दापदः कृती ।
 महिमासमहेद्रवर्याः शीर्षस्यादुन्नतं न मे ॥
 अयमन्वा पदप्रीतेरुदगारो याङ्मयाकृतिः ।
 अर्थः कश्चिदनेनापि सतां यदि मयाजितम् ॥

“If a fortunate person recites this text and thereby surmounts his misery, it is the glory of the great Goddess; let it not turn my head. My devotion towards the mother’s feet has gushed forth, taken a literary form and has become this text. If some purpose is achieved for the good people by this, I have succeeded.”

There are thousand verses in the text. It is divided into forty *stabakas* of twenty five verses each, four *stabakas* constituting a *sataka* of which there are ten. All the verses in a *stabaka* are of the same metre while the *stabakas* are composed in different metres. The first verse of each *stabaka* is a benedictory verse extolling the smile of the Goddess.

If all the first verses of the forty *stabakas* are read together, one is wonder-struck at the variety of ways in which the poet describes the smile of the Goddess. The last verse in each *stabaka* gives the name of the metre employed in the *stabaka*. As such, if one memorises all the last forty verses in each *stabaka*, one would have no difficulty in recognising the various metres in which Sanskrit verses are couched.

The mode of creation, the supreme form of the great Goddess, the forms of the Vedic and Tantric deities, means of getting their favour, yogic experiences got by the grace of the Goddess, the essential principles of *dasa mahā vidyās*, the ten Great Disciplines, method of worshipping them and the fruits

of such worship, practice of *vidyas* enunciated in the *upanishads*—these are some of the profound topics that are dealt with in the text, backed up by the authority of the *sāstras* and the authenticity of self experience combined with rare poetic feeling and charm. The Sanskrit rhetoricians define the value and purpose of poetry as *kāntāsammitatayā upadesa yuje*. “Poetry does not command like a master, as do the scriptures; she does not advice like friend as do the *puranas*; she accomplishes her object by an intimate appeal, as the beloved wins the heart of her lover, by her charm of address and resonant sense, by a pleasing tact of expression laden with suggestions, finding her way straight to the soul of her lover, for his acceptance and delectations”.¹ Such is the poetry of Kavyakantha and he excels himself in *umāsahasram*.

What does the poet himself say about the work ?

दर्शितं रमणस्यर्षेर्यावद्वाक्येर्मिताक्षरे ।
 यावच्चपितृपादानां विज्ञातमुपदेशतः ॥
 तन्त्रेभ्योऽवगतं यावत्प्राच्याचारशासिनाम् ।
 यावत्परमपुण्यासु कुलगोष्ठीषु च श्रुतम् ॥
 विदितं विविधं यावदितिहास विलोकनात् ।
 यावदप्यात्मादृष्टं तपताविपुलंतपः ॥
 अधिकृत्य महामायां भुवनानामधीश्वरीम् ।
 अत्रस्तोत्रे प्रसङ्गेषु समस्तं तत्प्रदर्शितम् ॥

“Whatever has been revealed to me in measured words by the seer Ramana, whatever I have learnt from my revered father through initiation, whatever

1. Sri. Kapali Sastriar in “Sphota and the Spoken Word.”

I have gathered from the Tantric works of the ancient masters of the path, whatever I have heard from the most sacred esoteric groups, whatever I have known in various ways by looking into *itihāsas*, whatever has been seen and experienced by me in the course of my extensive *tapas*—all that I have explained in appropriate contexts in this *stotra* about the Great Deluder, the presiding ruler of all the worlds”.

By this, one should not imagine that only profound and serious matters pertaining to *vedas*, *tantras* and metaphysics are dealt with in this great piece of hymnal literature. The music of the metres and the elegance of expression, these two are enough to hold the readers spell-bound. Lovers of Sanskrit Poetry, students of Rhetoric and the learned critics, all find a delectable feast in this grand Poem. The Goddess is portrayed as the daughter of the Mountain Himalayas and there are charming descriptions about her birth, childhood, youth, marriage and love. Artistic portrayals, deft and delicate delineations and delightful descriptions abound when the poet talks of the ravishing smile, the gracious glance and the glory of the name of the Goddess. Various rhetorical qualities like *ojas*, *prasāda* and *mādhurya* pervade the whole work and make it a vibrant vehicle of soul-filling Poetry.

अत्रापि गुण लेशश्चेदालङ्कारिक सम्प्रताः ।
सप्रतापः सरस्वत्या निर्गच्छन्त्या अनर्गलम् ॥

“If there are a few qualities in this work which have the approbation of rhetoricians, it is the glory of the Goddess of Speech flowing without any impediment”.

said the poet in all humility.

Let us take one or two verses and illustrate the unique beauty of this grand poem.

The episodes of love between Parvati and Paramasiva are described in the twelfth *stabaka* which reminds one of the eighth *sarga* of *kumārasambhava*. In both, the theme is love and the metre employed is *rathoddhatā*. But the poet of *umā-sahasram* feels that it is not proper to describe the amorous acts of the primordial parents. How he nicely avoids the embarrassment by this verse !

ब्रह्मचर्यं नियमादचञ्चला
नायिकायदि लुलायमर्दिनी ।
नायकश्चसुमबाणसूदनो
चेदकोरति रहस्यमेतयोः ॥

“If the wife crushes buffaloes and is steadfast in her discipline of celibacy and the husband vanquishes the God of love, who can know the secret of their amorous sports ?”

In the *stabaka* describing Ardhanarisvara, the first verse runs thus:

इतः पीत्वा कुचंस्कन्दे
प्रसारितकरे ततः ।
जयतिस्मितपुद्भूतं
शिवयोरेकदेहयोः ॥

“The child Skanda sucks one breast and stretches his hand for the other. The smile of the Siva couple in one body, arising out of this, reigns victorious.”

The child Skanda is not aware that his parents having a single body, have only one breast. As is usual with children, he stretches his hand for the other. Seeing the discomfiture of the child, the Siva couple smile.

In this great poem, every verse has to be read and its beauty enjoyed. It is very difficult to be selective. This gem of a poem has been set in the gold of a lucid Sanskrit Commentary. The foremost disciple of Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, Sri Kapali Sastriar wrote his Sanskrit Commentary *prabhā* on his Guru's work and made *umāsahasram* well-known amongst spiritual seekers and literary savants. It was no wonder that Sri Sastriar-himself steeped in *yoga* and *tapas*, equipped with an erudition of no mean order, renowned for his scholarship in the language of the Gods, famed as an adept in *mantra*, *tantra*, *ayurveda*, Astrology and all the sastraic lore was able to bring out, in his commentary the intricacies of thought, the wealth of feeling, the beauty of the scintillating style, the delight of diction, the lifting melody and rhythm, the various nuances, shades, colour—all those things that go to make the grand poem.

Sastriar called the commentary *prabhā* the light that emanated from the effulgence of Vasishtha Muni and justified his writing by saying that it was like offering as *arghya* Ganges water to Ganges itself *gangāyās tīrtham ādāya tasyām tasyai jalāñjaliḥ*. He said in all humility that his main reason for writing the commentary was to prevent the cessation of the progeny of knowledge *vidyāsantāna vicchedavāranam mula-kāranam*.

Umāsaharam stands as a fitting monument commemorating the lives of both the Muni and the Maharshi on earth.

ISOPANISHAD BHASHYAM

Īsāvāsya upanishad occurs at the end of the white *yajur veda* (*vājasaneyi samhitā*) and is considered to be very important in the field of original Upanishadic thought. Though these verses are couched in very simple Sanskrit, the meaning is not at all clear as apparently contradictory terms are used and the problem is to find a meaningful reconciliation.

The *upanishad* has not lent itself for a polemic interpretation at the hands of the traditional commentators. In this *bhāshya* of *īsupanishad* by Vasishtha Muni, we find a refreshingly original approach. In the light of the Teachings of the Maharshi, the Muni proceeds to clear the intricacies in his simple and elegant way. All the hidden and secret teaching in the *upanishad* assume a contour and a meaning in the light of the Maharshi's teachings.

The *bhāshya* in Sanskrit is itself published for the first time and the English translation is bound to reveal how the Maharshi's teachings are very much akin to the Upanishadic thought.

ISOPANISHAD BHASHYAM

The Commentary on *Isopanishad*

अथवाजसनेयिनां संहितोपनिषदं व्याख्यास्यामः

Now we shall comment on the Upanishad of
Vajasaneyi Samhita.

Mantra 1

मन्त्रः

ओं ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं
यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा
मागृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

भाष्यम्. जगत्यां प्रपञ्चे ; यत्किञ्च जगत् गतिमतः प्राणवत् इतियावत्
; तत् इदं सर्वम् ; ईशा सर्वशक्तेन परमात्मना ; वास्यं आच्छाद्यं व्याप्यं
इत्यर्थः ; तेन जगदंशेन परित्यक्तेन अविषयी कृतेनेतियावत् ; भुञ्जीथा
अनुभव, ईद्वरं इतिशेषः ; घटेकम्बुगीववत्त्वादेः विकारांशस्य
परित्यागेन मृदनुभववत् जगत्यां नाम रूपादि विकारांशापरित्यागेन कारण
भूतसदनुभवः सिध्यति इति तात्पर्यम् ; एवं अनया त्रिपाद्या ज्ञानयोग
उक्तः ; उत्तरया पंचपाद्या कर्मयोगं आह ; मागृधः मा कामं कृथाः
; धनं कस्यस्वित् न कस्यचित् इत्यर्थः

“*Om*. In this expanding world, whatever is moving and has life, all this is enveloped, pervaded by the Almighty Supreme Soul; leaving that portion which appears as the world, by not cognising it, experience the Lord; just as one can experience the earth of the pot by ignoring that part of the change as a conch-like neck etc. of the pot, so also one can, by abandoning that part of the change as name and form etc. in the world, get the experience of the pure Existence which is the Cause. Thus by these three words, the Yoga of knowledge has been expounded. The five words that follow say about the Yoga of Action; do not have any desire for anybody's wealth.

Mantra 2

मन्त्रः

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि

जिजीविषेच्छतंसमाः ।

एवं त्वयि नान्यथे तोऽस्ति

नकर्मलिप्यते नरे ॥

भा. इहलोके कर्माणि विहितानि, कुर्वन्नेव श्रुतं समाः चिरं ; जिजीविषेत् जीवितुं इच्छेत् ; शाश्वतं एव अत्र (जीवितम्) विवक्षितं कर्म योगफलभूतम् ; एवं त्वयि नरे कर्म नलिप्यते संगायनभवति ; इतो मार्गात् अन्यथा नास्ति ; निष्क्रमविहितकर्माचरणात् अन्यो मार्गो नास्ति कर्मलेपाभावाय इत्यर्थः :

Doing the ordained actions in this world, one should desire to live long a hundred years. A life eternal is implied here, which is the fruit of the yoga of Action. In this way, the action does not stick to you, the man, it does not result in attachment. There is no other way than this one. The meaning is that for the actions not to stick, the one and only way is to perform the ordained actions without any desire.

Mantra 3

मन्त्र :

असुर्या नामते लोकः
अन्धेन तमसावृताः ।
तौस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति
ये के चात्महनोजनाः ॥

भा. अन्धेन तमसावृताः ज्ञानशक्ति प्रविलयनात् ; असुन प्राणान् रान्ति अपहरन्ति अपगत प्रज्ञानं कुर्वन्ति इति प्रज्ञापरि पन्थिनोभावाः असुरा उच्यन्ते ; तद्धितत्वात् असुर्या नामते अस्मद् दृष्टिपरोक्षाः लोकः सन्ति इति श्लेषः ; ये केच आत्महनः प्रकरणात् आत्मज्ञानश्चून्यत्वात् कर्मलेपत्वाच्च हेतुभ्यां शरीराद् विज्ञानमयस्य पृथक्करणाभावादन्तर्काले आत्मनो हन्तारः प्रज्ञापरिच्युतेः स्थावरसाम्यं इता इत्यर्थः ; ते तान् पूर्वोक्तान् असुर्यान् लोकान् प्रेत्य अभिगच्छन्ति ; मूर्छितस्य यादृशो लोकः तादृशाएषां लोक इति विज्ञायते ; ज्ञानयोगीतु इहैवात्मानमनुभवति ; कर्मयोगीतु अलिप्तत्वात् अन्ततः प्राप्नोति अमृतत्वम् अपरस्तु आत्महन्तुर्जगुप्सितगतिर्भवतीति पर्यवसन्नं तात्पर्यम्

Shrouded by blind darkness because of the complete loss of the force of knowledge, *rānti* they

take away *asūn* the life forces, make one bereft of right knowledge; the feelings that are obstacles to right knowledge are called *asurās*; in the compound, in the sense of pertaining to, the word becomes *asūryā*; *nāma*, by name, it has to be inferred that these worlds exist beyond the ken of our perception. All those who kill their souls-in the context, the meaning is this: because of two reasons that they lack self-knowledge and are tainted by actions, at the time of final exit, they are unable to separate the gnostic being from the body; so they kill their souls, because of the slip from right knowledge, they become equal to inanimate objects. They repair to the aforesaid worlds of *asūryā* at the time of passing away; it is learnt that the worlds of these are akin to the world of a man who has swooned. The person who practises the yoga of knowledge experiences the self here itself; the person who practises the yoga of action ultimately attains immortality as he is not tainted by actions; but the other one, the killer of the soul has a repugnant end. This is the sum and substance of the *mantra*.

Mantra 4

मन्त्र :

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो
 नेनहेवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत ।
 तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येतिष्ठत
 तस्मिन्नपो मातरिद्ववादधाति ॥

भा. एकं सर्वोपादानत्वात् सर्वात्मकमिति केवलं किमपि वस्तु ; अनेजत् स्वभावात् अचञ्चलम् ; मनसोजवीयो वेगवत्तरं धर्मभूतज्ञानद्वारा पूर्वमर्षत् गच्छत् एनत् देवा नान्नुवन् पठ्वान्नप्रापुः ; तत्तिष्ठत् अचञ्चलं एव धावतोऽन्यानत्येति अतिलङ्घ्यते ; तस्मिन् मातरिष्वा निजक्रिया शक्तिरूपो वायुरपोरसंदधाति धारयति ; यदलेपत्वात् सूक्ष्माति सूक्ष्मत्वात् सर्वातिगत्वाच्च अन्याभिः विभूतिभिः अस्पृश्यमासीत् तत्रमातरिष्वा निमित्तेन रसः सूक्ष्मभूत्वा प्राणात्मको धियमाणो योगं प्रापेत्यर्थः

The one, being the material cause of all is the soul of All, Absolute, something indefinable. It is unmoving, stable, by nature; through its quality of knowledge it has more speed, faster than the mind. It goes in front and the gods following behind could not attain it. It stands motionless but overtakes the others who run. In that the wind holds the essence of the waters, its own action-force. As it does not stick to anything, is subtlest of the subtle and transcends all, no other manifestation could touch it. There the wind as the instrument, became the subtle essence and sustaining it in the form of *prāna* vital force, attained union. This is the meaning.

Mantra 5

मन्त्र :

तदेजति तन्नेजति
तददूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्यसर्वस्य
तदुसर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

भा : तदेजति तन्नेजति प्रागुक्तरीत्या । तददूरे सूर्यमण्डलान्तर्वर्तित्वात् । तदन्तिके हृदयान्तर्वर्तित्वात् । तदस्य सर्वस्य अन्तः न केवलं मण्डलहृदययोः । तदस्य सर्वस्य बाह्यतः । पूर्णमित्युक्तंभवति । द्विरुः पादपूरणः ।

It moves, it moves not, in the way aforesaid. It is far away, as it is in the orb of the sun; it is quite near as it is in the heart. It is in all this, not only in the orb and in the heart. It is also outside all this. It fills everything. The two *u*'s are expletives.

Mantra 6

मन्त्र :

यस्तुसर्वाणिभूतानि
आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषुचात्मानं
ततोऽनविजुगुप्सते ॥

भा : यस्तु सर्वाणिभूतानि आत्मनि एव अनुपश्यति । आत्मानं च सर्व भूतेषु । ततोऽनुभवान्नविजुगुप्सते न कस्मिंश्चित् वस्तुनि जुगुप्सावान् भवति । सर्वत्र आत्मदर्शनात् । अस्यानुभवस्तु तेन त्यक्तेन इत्येव ।

Whoever sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings, he does not shrink with disgust from that experience. He does not become disgusted with anything as the Self is perceived everywhere. The experience of this state will come only by *tēna tyaktēna* 'leaving that'.

Mantra 7

मन्त्र :

यस्मिन् सर्वाणिभूतानि
 आत्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।
 तत्रकोमोहः कः शोकः
 एकत्वमनुपपद्यतः ॥

भा : विजानत आत्मज्ञानिनो यस्मिन् दशाविशेषे सर्वाणिभूतान्यात्मैवाभूत् ,
 अपृथग्भावेनदर्शनात् । तत्र दशाविशेषे एकत्वमनुपपद्यतः पुरुषस्य को मोहः कः
 शोकः? मोहशोकौ नस्यातांइत्यर्थः । पूर्वत्र विकरांश्चत्यागेन ब्रह्मानुभूतिर्विवक्षिता
 । विकराणां विषयत्वेनसेवासंसारः । विभूतित्वेनोपासनं तु पूर्णानुभूत्यप्रतिद्वंद्वीति ।

For the knowing one, for the knower of the Self in a particular state, all beings become only the Self, as the perception was without the separative idea. What is delusion, what is grief to a person who perceives the oneness in that particular state? The meaning is that for him there is no delusion, no grief. Earlier it was mentioned that the experience of Brahman resulted from abandoning that part of the change.

Here the perception of everything as Brahman is mentioned. Serving the changes as sensory objects results in Samsara, the cycle of births and deaths. Worshipping the same as manifestations results in an integral experience unchallenged.

Mantra 8

मन्त्र :

सपर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणं
 अस्नाविरंशुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
 कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयंभूः
 याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधात्
 श्राद्धवतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥

भा: समुक्तः पुरुषोऽकायमशरीरम् । अव्रणमभेद्यत्वात् अस्नाविरं अभौतिकत्वात् । शुद्धं अमलिनम् । अपापविद्धं असंगत्वात् । शुक्रं अमृतं ज्योतिर्मयं दिव्यं वपुः पर्यगात् प्राप । कविः मन्त्रदर्शी । मनीषी मनसईशः । परिभूः सर्वात्मभावेनव्याप्तः । स्वयंभूः अमृतेदिव्येवपुषि-स्वयमाविर्भावात् । सपुरुषोऽर्थान् वेदितत्यानंश्चान् । याथातथ्यतः सत्यतया । श्राद्धवतीभ्यः समाभ्यः चिरं लोकेजिज्ञासूनामर्थस्थितये । व्यदधात् रचयामास । अभिदधौ इत्यर्थः । ऋषेरात्मान्वितैवपरोक्षवदेषोक्तिः । ईश्वराधिकाराऽयमित्येके ॥

He, the released person got a white immortal luminous divine form, bodyless, without any scar as it could not be hurt nor of flesh and blood as it was not made of the physical elements, pure without stain, not tainted by sin as it had no contact.

The poet seer of the *Mantra* the Master of the mind, pervaded everywhere being the Self of all, Self-born as he manifested of his own volition in the immortal divine form, that person created in

the world for years sempiternal for the benefit and welfare of those who want to know, the things that ought to be known in the light of Truth. He established these things. This is the utterance of Self realisation of the seen made covertly. Some say that this utterance refers to God.

Mantra 9

मन्त्र :

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ।
ततोभूयइवतेतमो यउविद्यायोरताः ॥

भा . येऽविद्यांकेवलानिदामित्यर्थः । साहि अविद्याकेवला । यतस्तदा नकिंचित् विजानाति । ते अन्धंतमः प्रविशन्ति ज्ञानशून्यत्वात् । ये विद्यायां (केवलायां त्रय्यादिविद्यायां) लोकज्ञानात्मिक्रयांचरताः सक्ताः । तेततः पूर्वोक्तात् तमसः भूयइवतमः प्रविशन्ति । विकराविज्ञानेन असमुच्चितं विज्ञानं कदाचित् न ब्रह्मज्ञाने । भेदेन विकर ग्रहः । अभेदेन बह्वनुभवइति परस्पर विरोधात् । नैवं विभूत्युपासनोच्छेदः । तत्रविकराणां पृथक्त्वेनाग्रहणात् अविद्यैवेति । उः पादपुरणः ॥

Avidyā, ignorance is mere sleep; sleep is sheer ignorance for at that time a person does not know a thing. Those who resort to *avidyā* enter into a blind darkness as they are devoid of knowledge. Those who are attached to mere knowledge, knowledge arising out of the study of the three Vedas etc. and knowledge born out of wordly wisdom, enter into a darkness. By not knowing the changes, knowledge

becomes noncomposite and can never result in the knowledge of Brahman. There is mutual contradiction in that by division the changes are known and by nondivision the Brahman is experienced. Thus this does not uproot the worship of manifestation. There as the changes are not grasped as separate things, it is only ignorance, *avidyā*. *Uh* is expletive.

Mantra 10

मन्त्र :

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्यया
अन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।
इतिशुश्रुमधीराणां
येनस्तत् विचचक्षिरे ॥

भा : विद्यया वक्ष्यमाणया अन्यदेवफलमाहुः । अविद्यया वक्ष्यमाणया अन्यतफलमाहुः । येनः तत् प्रकरणं विचचक्षिरे । तेषां धीराणां सक्रशादितिशेषः । इति पूर्वोक्त प्रकरणेशुश्रुम श्रुतवन्तः स्मः । यद्यपि अविद्याविद्ये निष्फलेकेवले तथापि ते प्रकरणान्तरेण समुच्छिते फलदे इति भावः ॥

They talk of a different result effected by knowledge which would be explained. They talk of another result effected by ignorance which would be explained. From those valourous ones who explained to us their operation, we have heard in the aforesaid fashion. The purport is that though mere knowledge and ignorance are of no use, they bear fruit compositely in another way. The same is said:

Mantra 11

मन्त्र :

विद्यां चाविद्यां च
 यस्तदवेदोभयसह ।
 अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा
 विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥

भा : विद्यां चाविद्यां चो भयंतत्सहसमुच्चयेन । यो वेद युगपत् विद्वान् अविद्वान् च भवतीत्यर्थः । कस्य विद्वान् कस्याविद्वान् इति चेत् ईश्वरस्य विद्वान् पार्थक्येन विक्रान्तां अविद्वान् इति व्याख्यास्यामः । स चाविद्यया पार्थक्येन विक्रान्तां अपरिज्ञानेन निमित्तेन मृत्युं प्रमादंतीर्त्वा विद्यया ईश्वरानुभूत्या अमृतं श्रावतं ब्रह्म भावेन स्थितिमश्नुते प्राप्नोति । जगद्यः पृथग्भावेन जानन्ननुभवति स ईश्वरं लक्षणतो जानन्नपि नैवानुभवति । अतएव केवलां विद्यां न्यषेधत् । ईश्वरस्याविद्वान् प्रपञ्चमविजानन्नपि न समाधिस्थः । तंतुनिदितमेव पठ्यामः । अतः केवलमविद्यां निनिन्द । अविद्या विद्ययोः प्रागुक्तरीत्या समुच्चयः स समाधिरेव ॥

The one who knows both about knowledge and ignorance together, compositely, becomes at the same time knower and non-knower. Knower of what? Non-knower of what? If a question is asked like this, we shall comment that he is the knower of God and non-knower separately of the changes. He crosses unconsciousness, death by the instrument of *avidyā*, that is by not separately knowing the changes and attains an immortal eternal state of being in Brahman by *vidyā*, that is by experience of God. One who knows the world separately and experiences, does not experience God though he knows him by inference.

This is why pursuit of mere knowledge is prohibited. One who does not know God, even when he does not know the universe, is not stationed in *samādhī*. We see him only as overcome by sleep. Therefore sheer ignorance is blamed. The seeing together compositely of knowledge and ignorance, *vidyā* and *avidyā*, in the aforesaid fashion is *samādhī*.

Mantra 12

मन्त्र :

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति
 येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते ।
 ततोभूयइवते तमो ।
 यउसम्भूत्याँरताः ॥

भा. ये असम्भूतिं संभूतिप्रतिद्वन्द्विनं विनाशमुपासते
 केवलंन्रियन्त इति यावत् । तेअन्धतमः प्रविशन्ति । येसम्भूत्याँरताः
 जन्मप्राप्ताइतियावत् । तेततो भूयइव तमः प्रविशन्ति । केवलेभ्यो
 मृतेभ्यो जाताः केवला अधिके तमसि प्रविष्ट इतिभावः ॥

Those who worship extinction, the diametrically opposite of existence, that is, those who merely die enter into a blind darkness. Those who are attached to existence, those who have taken birth enter into a darkness which is still more. The purport is that those who are merely born enter into more darkness than those who are merely dead.

Mantra 13

मन्त्रः

अन्यदेवाहुः सम्भवात्
अन्यदाद्गुरसम्भवात् ।
इतिशुश्रुमधीराणां
ये नस्तद्विचचक्षिरे ॥

भा. संभवादन्यदेवफलमाहुर्वक्ष्यमाणात् । असंभवात् विनाज्ञादन्यदेवफलमाहुर्वक्ष्यमाणात् । येनः अस्मभ्यं तत् प्रकरणं विचचक्षिरे । तेषां धीराणां सक्रशादि
तिशेषः । इति पूर्वोक्तप्रकरणेन शुश्रुमश्रुतवन्तःस्म यद्यपि मरण जन्मनी केवले
तमः प्रवेशहेतू तथपि प्रकरणान्तरेण समुच्चिते फलदे इतिभावः ॥

They talk of a different result effected by existence, which would be explained. They talk of another result effected by non-existence, that is extinction which would be explained. From those valourous ones who explained to us their operation we have heard in the aforesaid fashion. The purport is that though existence and extinction are causes for entering into darkness, even so they compositely bear fruit in another way. The same is said:

Mantra 14

मन्त्रः

संभूतिंच विनाशंच
यस्तद्वेदोभयैसह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युंतीर्त्वा
संभूत्याऽमृतमद्भुते ॥

भा: संभूतिविनाशं च तदुभयं सह समुच्चयेन यो वेदानुभवति युगपज्जातो मृतञ्च भवतीत्यर्थः । अभिमान त्यागात् अत्रशरीरेमृतः । तपसा आभ्यन्तरे ज्योतिषि तादात्म्यात् जातइतिविवेकः । स च विनाशेन देहाभिमानत्यागेन अत्रशरीरे मरणेन । मृत्युं प्रमादं तीर्त्वा । संभूत्या आभ्यन्तरे ज्योतिषि तादात्म्यात् दिव्येन जन्मना अमृतं ब्रह्म भावमब्रुते प्राप्नोति ॥

The one who knows, experiences both about existence and extinction together, compositely is at the same time born and dead. He dies here in the body by relinquishing the ego-sense. By *tapas* he becomes unified with the inner effulgence and is born. This is how it has to be understood. He crosses unconsciousness, death by extinction, by death in the body and attains an immortal Brahmic state by existence, by a divine birth produced by identification with the inner effulgence.

Mantra 15

मन्त्र :

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण
सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूषन् अपावृणु
सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये

भा. सत्यस्य प्रत्यगात्मनो मुखं भ्रूमडलवर्ति दिव्यमान्तरंचक्षुर्हिरण्मयेन पात्रेणाक्षो रुपरि भागेन ; पात्राकारत्वात् एष भागः पात्रं हिरण्मयमिति रूपितः । अपिहितं आच्छादितम् । अतो वयमन्तरन्धाः । पूषन् सूर्यमण्डलान्तर्वर्तिनं पुरुषत्वं तदपावृणुकुर्वपावृतम् । कस्मै प्रयोजनाय सत्यधर्माय प्रत्यगात्म धर्माय । दृष्टये प्रतीच्ये दृष्टय इतिभावः ।

The face of Truth, of the inner Self, the divine inner eye located in the region of the eyebrows is covered by the eye-lid which is in the form of a golden vessel. As the upper part of the eye resembles a vessel, the metaphor golden vessel is used. Therefore, we are blind inside. O Pushan, the person in the orb of the sun, uncover it for one whose *Dharma* is Truth, the inner Self, for his vision. The inner vision is meant.

Mantra 16

मन्त्र :

पूषन्नेकर्षं यमसूर्यं प्राजापत्य
व्यूहरश्मीन् समूह ।
तेजो यत्तेरूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते
पश्यामियोऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥

भा: पूषन् पोषक । एकर्षं सर्वमन्त्राणां द्रष्टः । यमनियामक । प्राजापत्य
प्रजापतेरखण्डात्मनो हिरण्यगर्भात्मना मण्डले प्रादुर्भूत सूर्य भगवन् । व्यूहसन्नाहय
। रश्मीन् किरणान् । समूह एकीकुरु । मम प्राणानां सर्वेषां सजातीयानां
अनुग्रहायेति भावः । रश्मयोहिप्राणा अध्यात्मम् । तेजस्तेजोमयं यत्ते कल्याणतमं
रूपं तत्ते पश्यामि । योऽसौ असौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि । साक्षत्कारादनन्तरं
इदमुच्यते ॥

O nourisher, sole seer, controller, manifest in the orb as *hiranyagarbha* (the golden womb) the indivisible self, the lord of the people, O sun-god, marshal the rays and gather them together. This is in order to favour all my life-breaths which are of

the same genre. This is the idea as the spiritual meaning of the ray is *prāna*, life-breath. I see the most auspicious of thy effulgent form. The one who is this person, he am I. This is said after direct realisation.

Mantra 17

मन्त्रः

वायुरनिलममृतं
अथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरम् ।
ओं क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्म
क्रतोस्मर कृतस्मर ॥

भा. वायुरनिलं निलयनरहितं अमृतं वस्तु । सङ्गरहित इतियवत् । अथेदं शरीरं भस्मान्तं नष्टरमित्यर्थः । मातरिब्रुवन एवेषास्तुतिः भवति । ओं प्रणवरूप । क्रतो सर्वक्रियाकारिन् । वायोस्मर मामितिशेषः । कृतं मयाकृतं । पुण्यंस्मर वाक्यस्य द्विर्वचनं प्रार्थनायां आदरातिशयार्थम् ॥

Vāyu has no place to merge, it is an immortal thing, devoid of any contact. And this body ends in ashes, is transient. This prayer is to Vayu. O the form of *pranava*, the doer of all actions, Vāyu, remember me. Remember the meritorious acts done by me. The repetition of the sentence twice indicates the special respect shown in the course of the prayer.

Mantra 18

मन्त्रः

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्
 विद्भवानिदेव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
 युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो
 भूयिष्ठांते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥

भा: द्युस्थानमन्तरिक्षस्थानंचदेवते प्रार्थिते । अथपृथिवीस्थानं प्रार्थयते । अग्नेदेव अस्मान् राये सम्पदे । विद्भवानि सर्वाणि । वयुनानि स्थानानि । विद्वान् । त्वं सुपथाशोभनेन मार्गेण । नय अस्मन् मत्तो । जुहुराणं लज्जाकरं एनो युयोधि पृथक्कुरु । ते तुभ्यम् । भूयिष्ठं नम उक्तिं विधेम । यदीशोपक्रम्य सूर्यवायुवेद्भवानराणां स्तुत्योपसंहरति । तत् ज्ञापय त्वुपनिषत् ईशः त्रिस एता देवता विभूतय इति विभूतयइति ॥

The Gods in the mid region and in the region of Heaven have been prayed to. Now the god of the earth region is prayed to. O Fire God, thou knowest all places; lead us by the auspicious path to wealth. Separate from us the sin which makes us ashamed. To thee we offer in abundance our words of salutation. By beginning with *īsa* (God) and closing with prayers to the Sun, Wind and Fire, the *upanishad* reminds us that these three gods are manifestations of the Supreme *īsa*, yea, the manifestations of the Supreme *īsa*.

अत्रायंशलोकोभवति

Here is the verse.

संहितान्तानुवाक्रेऽयं
 गोप्यो वाजसनेयिनाम् ।
 भाष्येणलघुनानेन
 दीपेनेव प्रकशितः ॥

This is the *anuvāka* at the end of the *samhitā* held secret by Vajasaneyins. This is brought to light as by means of a lamp by this simple commentary.

ईशोपनिषद् भाष्यं समाप्तम् ।

Thus ends the Commentary on *īsa upanishad*.

KAVYAKANTHA'S STYLE

It is said that the style of a poet is judged by the manner he writes prose. In fact the prose style is said to be the touch stone on which the abilities of the poet are tested. *Gadyam kavinām nikasam vadanti.*

Kavyakantha had the capacity of explaining abstruse metaphysical subjects in simple and elegant Sanskrit. It is a delight to read his commentaries. We have provided in this text, examples through *Upadesa Sara Bhāshya.*

He broke new ground in *Sutra* literature. The pithy aphorisms that he wrote are clothed in an easy understandable charming style. Here we give excerpts from “*Tatvānusāsanam*”, a work he composed extempore in an hour's time at the request of one of his disciples:

सप्तमः खण्डः

1. अधयोगाः ।
2. फलापेक्षा रहितं सत्कर्म कर्मयोगः ।
3. मनसा मन्त्रस्यध्यानं मन्त्रयोगः ।
4. वायोर्निग्रहो हठ योगः ।
5. चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधो राजयोगः ।
6. आत्मविचारणं ज्ञानयोगः ।
7. अहंवृत्तिमूलान्वेषणमेवात्मविचारणं नशास्त्रचर्चा ।
8. आत्मसमर्पणं प्रपत्तियोगः ।
9. राजयोग प्रपत्तियोग पुरस्सरं नित्यं प्रवहन्त्याः शक्तेः महता मौनेनात्मन्यवकाशं दत्त्वा पञ्चानां च कोशानां अनवरतं चिदग्निनासंस्करणं अमृतयोगः ॥
10. अस्याङ्गं कल्पसेवेत्येके ॥

Part Seven

1. Now about Yogas.
2. Good acts without expectation of result is the Yoga of Action.
3. Meditation on the *mantra* by the mind is *mantra yoga*.
4. Control of breath is Hatha Yoga.
5. The stopping of mental activities is Raja yoga.
6. Enquiry of Self is the Yoga of Knowledge.
7. Self enquiry means only seeking the origin of the 'I' activity and not discussion of *sāstras*.
8. Surrender of Self is the Yoga of *prapatti*.
9. By means of Raja Yoga and Prapatti Yoga open oneself in great silence to the everflowing Sakti and culture the five sheaths incessantly with the fire of consciousness.
10. Some say a part of this is an aid to transformation.

In the same work, Part Eight gives a succinct account of the Upanishadic *vidyās*:

अष्टमः खण्डः

1. अथामृतयोगेमहामौनसाधिका विद्याः ।
2. केवलं सम्प्रसादेन तिष्ठेत् साभूमविद्या ।
3. प्रणवं ध्यायेत् कण्ठकुहरे स्थिरमनाः सोदगीधविद्या ।
4. गत्या गति प्रत्यवेक्षणद्वारा प्राणवायुं ध्यायेत्सा संवर्गविद्या ।
5. तीव्र निर्विषयालोचनजं उष्माणं ध्यायेत्सा ज्योतिर्विद्या ।
6. रसं ध्यायेत् जिह्वायां स्थिरमनाः सा वारुणीविद्या ।
7. उपजिह्वायामिन्द्रगयोनिविद्या ।
8. दृष्टिं दृष्टारं वाध्यायेत् सोपकरोसलविद्या ॥

Part Eight

1. Now in Amṛta Yoga, the *vidyās* that can be accomplished in great silence;
2. Merely remain with equanimity. It is Bhuma Vidya.
3. With a steadfast mind, in the pit of the throat concentrate on Om. It is Udgitha Vidya.
4. Contemplate on the life-breath through watching the inhalation and exhalation. It is Samvarga Vidya.
5. Meditate on the heat created by an intense study withdrawn from sensory perceptions. It is Jyotir Vidya.
6. With a steadfast mind meditate on the relish in the tongue. It is Varuni Vidya.
7. In the root of the tongue. It is Indrayoni Vidya.
8. Meditate on the vision or on the seer. It is Upakosala Vidya.

Even in private conversation, when Kavyakantha spoke in Sanskrit, his style was inimitable. About the grand poem *Harasahasram* that he composed in the presence of Arunachalesvara in the Tiruvannamalai temple and how he lost the only manuscript copy, he related to a disciple in these words: (as recorded in *vāsistha vaibhavam*)

ममशिषयाणामेकः कल्पदं रामस्वामि ज्ञास्त्री मदीयं हस्तलिखितं हरसहस्रं पुस्तकं
एकमेवस्थितं प्रति-लेखायादाय ग्रामं गतो गतएवस्वर्गम् । नष्टं चपुस्तकं मया
पृथस्तदबान्धवाः नतददृष्टमिव्यबुवन् । मयातु पुत्रनाशशोकोऽनुभूतः । इमेचल्लोकाः
स्मृताववशिष्टाः ।

“One of my disciples Kalpat Ramaswami Sastri took my hand-written book of Harasahasram, the only copy I had, for copying, departed to his village and departed from the earthly scene. The book was lost; I asked his relations; they said that it was not to be seen. I felt aggrieved as though I had lost a son. These verses are those that have lingered in the memory”.

There are not many specimens of letter-writing in Sanskrit and it is to the credit of Kavyakantha that he blazed a new trail. In the earlier articles, we have quoted from some of his letters to the Maharshi. Here is a letter written by him to the Maharshi from Sirsi:

भगवन् मायामानुष, इहसर्वमवदातम् प्रभो ! ममस्थितिं श्रीचरणसन्निधौ
किञ्चिन्निवेदयितुं उत्सहे । केचिन्मन्यन्ते महान्तमानन्दमेव परमं लक्ष्यम् ।
अपरेमन्वते निरतिशयं योगसिद्धिमेव मुख्यं लक्ष्यम् । परे जानन्ति सुखदुः
खातीतां कामपिस्थितिमेव प्रधानं लक्ष्यम् । इतरे बुध्यन्ते मृत्यु विजयमेवाग्रयं
लक्ष्यम् । अहंतुजाने कामोपशान्तिमेव कमनीयं लक्ष्यम् । असारतया बहवःकामा
उपशान्ताः । विधूताः के चिदुपशान्ताः । अनुभूताः केचिदुपशान्ताः । दूरं
गच्छतेति प्रार्थिताः के चिदुपशान्ताः । असारो वा ससारो वा कश्चिदेक एव
कामो नोपशान्यत्यधुनाऽपिमे । तंनिषेद्धुं शक्तिरेव नास्तिमे । तंदूरं गच्छेति
प्रार्थयितुं इच्छेव नोदेतिमे ।
अत्रममकण्ठे भगवतः सहानुभूतिं याचे । विदितव्यमेस कामो भगवतः.....

O Lord, the Illusory Man,

Here all is right.... Lord, I desire to place before
thy august presence a little of my present condition.

Some consider great bliss as the supreme goal. Others think that an unexcelled accomplishment in Yoga is the important goal. Some others understand the conquest of death as the foremost goal. I, however, know the cure from desires as the beautiful goal. Many desires have been got rid off as they were useless. Some were got rid off by rejection. Some were got rid off after due experience. Others were got rid off by praying to them to go far away. Even now, useless or useful, I am not able to cure myself of only one desire. I have no strength even to reject it. There rises no inclination even to pray to it to go away.

I beg the sympathy of Bhagawan in my present difficulty. That desire is known to me and to Bhagawan”.

Lastly we shall give an example of his writing from his unfinished novel ‘*pūrnā*’. Written in the fashion of *kādambari* one expects long compounds, strained similes and unwieldy paragraphs. But what a contrast to the traditional style !

गुरोर्जयन्त्युत्सवसन्देशः

स्तब्धेव सर्वतो मौनेन निस्तरङ्गासभा । तदा देशिको निजममूल्यं सन्देशं
मितेनोपन्यासेन सदसे प्रादात् “वत्सा ! सर्वेषां भुवनानां चालयित्री पराशक्तिः
। सा सर्वभ्यो भुवनेभ्यः परस्ताद्विराजते । भुवनेषुच भाजते । भुवनातीतां
सदाशिवामाहुः । अत्र दृश्ये तस्याद्वित्वारि शरीराणि । आकाशं प्रथमंशरीरम् ।
तदुपाधिरीद्वरी । सर्वस्य जगतः सम्राज्ञी । सूर्यमण्डलं द्वितीयं शरीरम् । तदु
पाधिर्गायत्री । सवित्री प्राणिनाम् । भूमण्डलं तृतीयं शरीरम् । तदुपाधिर्लक्ष्मीः ।
धारिणी प्राणिनाम् । चन्द्रमण्डलं चतुर्थं शरीरम् । तदुपाधिः काली । संहारिणी
प्राणिनाम् । इत्यधि देवतम् ।

अथाध्यात्मम् । निर्विकल्पेसमाधौ परिशिष्य शुद्धा चिदेव सदाशिवा । सविकल्पे
समाधौ दहराकाशासञ्चारिणी कुण्डलिनी शक्तिरिद्वरी । वागायत्री । मनोलक्ष्मीः
। प्राणः काली ।

प्राणस्य गत्यागति निरीक्षणेन कालीमुपासीत । तेन सिद्धेन प्राणो ज्योतिर्मयो
भवेत् । संकल्प तरङ्ग निरीक्षणेन लक्ष्मीमुपासीत । तेन सिद्धेन मनो धूतसंकल्पं

भवेत् । सूक्ष्मस्वरानुसंधानेन गायत्रीमुपासीत । तदानीं आभ्यन्तरः शब्दो
ज्योतिर्मयो भवेत् । ध्रुवयास्पृत्या ईश्वरीमुपासीत । तेन सर्वग्रन्थि मोक्षोभवेत्
। सहजया निष्ठया सदाशिवामुपासीत । तेनात्मा बहभूतोभवेत् । अयं
शिष्यान्प्रति संदेशः” ।

समहोपदेशभूतोगुरोर्जयन्त्युत्सव सन्देशः प्रायः सर्वेषां मनांसि देवताभिमुखान्य
कर्षीत् । इतः प्रागेवदेवताभिमुखानि मनांसि देवता लग्नान्यकर्षीत् । इतः
प्रागेव देवता लग्नानि मनांसि देवतामयान्यकर्षीत् ॥

The Message on the Birth-Day Festival of the Guru

Stunned as though everywhere by silence, the assembly was without a ripple. Then the master gave his priceless message to the assembly in a short discourse.

“Children! The Supreme Force *Parā Sakti* is the motive power of all the worlds. She shines beyond all the worlds and also shines in the worlds. They call her transcending the worlds as Sadasiva. In this visible universe, her bodies are four.

Sky is the first body. It is conditioned as Ishvari, empress of all the universe. The solar orb is the second body. It is conditioned as Gayatri, creatrix of beings. The earth region is the third

body. It is conditioned as Lakshmi, the sustainer of beings. The lunar orb is the fourth body. It is conditioned as Kali, the destroyer of beings. This is as pertaining to Gods.

Now as pertaining to the Spirit. Sadasiva is the pure consciousness which alone remains in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. In the Samadhi where there is outside awareness (Savikalpa) the Kundalini Sakti having her movement in the heart-space is Ishvari. Speech is Gayatri. Mind is Lakshmi and life breath is Kali.

One should worship Kali by watching the inflow and outflow of the life-breath. When it is accomplished, the life breath Prana becomes full of light. One should worship Lakshmi by watching the thoughts rising like waves in the mind. When it is accomplished, the mind will be devoid of thoughts. One should worship Gayatri by following with care the subtle sound. Then the inner sound will become full of light. One should worship Ishvari by constant remembrance. By that the release of all knots will be accomplished. One should worship Sadasiva by a natural inborn poise. By that the Self will be transformed to Brahman. This is my message to my disciples”.

The message which was a great teaching given at the festival of the Birthday of the Guru generally turned everybody's mind towards God. If the minds were already turned towards God, it made them attached to God. If the minds were already attached to God, it made them full of God.

KAVYAKANTHA'S WORKS

Vasishtha Muni never wrote for name or fame. Tapas was his preoccupation. As a part of tapas, he took to literary activities. His works cover a wide range of subjects. Some are published, others await publication. We give below a list of his important works in Sanskrit.

In the field of Stotra literature his contribution is considerable. Each work deals with the worship of a Godhead, its names, forms, mantras, the secret principles involved, etc.

1. *Umāsahasram*: This is the magnum opus of the Muni. It is available in print with the Sanskrit Commentary Prabha of Sri Kapali Sastriar.
2. *Indrani saptasati*: A laud of seven hundred verses cast in the various metrical moulds derived from the seven *chandas* of the Veda *gayatri usnik anushtubh, bṛhāti, pankti, trīshtubh* and *jagati*. The Deity is Indrani, the consort of the Paramount Lord Indra of the Vedas: Each verse of chiselled beauty like a crystal reflects the glory of the Goddess.
3. *Prachandachandi trisati*: A laud of three hundred verses on Chinnamasta, known as Prachandachandi. Her manifestations like Renuka are praised.
4. *Umāsatakam*: Hundred verses in praise of Uma, the consort of Siva.
5. *Sivasatakam*: Hundred verses in praise of Siva.

6. *Umātrisati*: Three hundred names of Uma for daily recital are composed as a stotra.
7. *Indrasahasranāma*: Thousand names of Indra as occurring in the Veda culled and made into a powerful stotra. There is no repetition of names, no expletives. A unique composition conferring all the benefits of Veda adhyayana on the reciter.
8. *Gītamālā*: A garland of stotras on the Vedic deities like Agni, Vayu and Surya.
9. *Ramanachatvārimsat*: Forty verses in praise of the Maharshi. These are daily recited in Sri Ramanasramam.
10. *Herambopasthānam*: Stotras dealing with the worship of God Ganapati. Here the *mantra* of Ucchishta Ganapati is mentioned through the verses of one *stotra*.
11. *Visvamimāmsā*: This deals with the principle of Iswara, Sakti, all the gods and goddesses, the Individual soul, the Divine Descent and the means of worship as propounded in the Upanishads. It also deals with the concepts of Heaven, Hell, various *lokās* and the final liberation.
12. *Ramanagīta*: A record of the questions asked by disciples and answers given by the Maharshi.
13. *Tatvagbantāsatakam*: One hundred verses composed extempore in one hour as a part of *avadhāna*, near Udupi. It is a good example of the Muni's metaphysical writings.

14. *Mahavidyāsutram*: The ten Cosmic powers of the Great Goddess, the Tantric *dasa mahā vidyas* are dealt with in these aphorisms, and their mysteries unravelled.
15. *Rājayogasārasutram*: On the essence of Raja Yoga, these Sutras are composed.
16. *Sabdapramānacharchā*: Here the origin of the Veda is discussed.
17. *Panchajanacharchā*: Here untouchability is condemned with the authority of the *sāstras*.
18. *Vivāhadharmasutram*: This is on marriage as a sacrament.
19. *Isopanishat bhāshya*: A simple and lucid commentary on the intricate Upanishad.
20. *Upadesa sāra bhāshya*: A commentary on the Maharshi's *upadesa sāram*.
21. *Chikitsānusāsanam*.
22. *Āyurvedasangraha*.
23. *Prānatosanam*.
These are works on medicine.
24. *Sōdhasloki*.
25. *Horānirnayasangraha*.
26. *Tribhāvaphalachandrikā*.
These three deal with astrology.

27. *Indragītamū*: This is a book in Telugu *dvipadā*, a *stotra* of Indra.

Apart from these, are certain works of the poet, incomplete. In this category comes the famous novel *pūrnā* and the work of criticism on *mahā-bharata*. Kavyakantha has also written on an ideal constitution *sāmrājya nibhandanam* for a country.

All the works display his inspiration, originality and uniqueness.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. उमासहस्रम् । | 15. राजयोगसारसूत्रम् । |
| 2. इन्द्राणीसप्तशती । | 16. शब्दप्रमाणचर्चा । |
| 3. प्रचण्डचण्डीत्रिशती । | 17. पञ्चजनचर्चा । |
| 4. उमाशतकम् । | 18. विवाहधर्मसूत्रम् । |
| 5. शिवशतकम् । | 19. ईशोपनिषदभाष्यम् । |
| 6. उमात्रिशती । | 20. उपदेशसारभाष्यम् । |
| 7. इन्द्रसहस्रनाम । | 21. चिकित्सानुशासनम् । |
| 8. गीतमाला । | 22. आयुर्वेदसंग्रहः । |
| 9. रमणचट्वारिंशत् । | 23. प्राणतोषणम् । |
| 10. हेरम्बोपस्थानम् । | 24. षोडशश्लोकी । |
| 11. विठ्ठवमीमांसा । | 25. होरानिर्णयसंग्रहः । |
| 12. रमणगीता । | 26. त्रिभावफलचन्द्रिका । |
| 13. तत्त्वघण्टाशतकम् । | 27. इन्द्रगीतम् । |
| 14. मद्यविद्यासूत्रम् । | द्विपदा स्तोत्र |

